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THE SIN OF ST. HULDA

OR

LOVE AND FAITH

AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

G. STUART OGILVIE *a.*



“ And faith,
Creating what it feigned.”

—SHELLEY.

RAHWAY, N. J.

THE MERSON CO.

1896

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BY
G. STUART OGLIVIE.

CHARACTERS.

HEINRIC, Baron of Mindenburg.

OTHO, Prince of Halberstadt.

JOHN KNIPPERDOLLING, Burgomaster of Mindenburg.

KONRAD, the Printer,

NIKAULAS, the Vintner,

HERMANN, the Bootmaker,

FRANZ, the Butcher,

STORTEBEKER, the Brewer,

} Councillors of Mindenburg.

MANTEUFFEL, Knipperdolling's brother-in-law.

JOACHIM,

ULRIC,

GEORGE,

ERNST,

} Heinric's friends.

MAXIMILIAN, Tapster at the "Golden Goose."

CITIZEN,

SOLDIERS, BURGHERS, CITIZENS, ETC., ETC.

LEISSE,

MARTE,

} Courtesans.

FRIEDERIKE, Hostess of the "Golden Goose."

ST. HULDA.

BURGHERS' WIVES—CHILDREN, ETC., ETC.

THE SIN OF ST. HULDA.

ACT I.

The Call.

ACT II.

A Protestant.

ACT III.

“Splendide Mendax.”

ACT IV.

The Cry of Imperfection.

SCENE.—The Free Imperial City of Mindenburg, Germany.

TIME.—1552.

Six months are supposed to elapse between Acts I. and II. and eight weeks between Acts III. and IV.

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THE SIN OF ST. HULDA;

OR,

LOVE AND FAITH.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Interior of "The Golden Goose." Evening. Large window, R. Arched entrance, R. U. E. Door, L. U. E. Fireplace and door L. Tables, chairs, benches, etc. Some VILLAGERS, SOLDIERS, and TRAVELLERS discovered drinking, MAX and FRIEDERIKE waiting on them. Laughter and clatter of tankards.*

Traveller [*Rapping on table.*] What ho, there!
The score!

Max. At your service, sirs, at your service.

[*Goes to them.*]

Enter a well-dressed CITIZEN, R. U. E. who crosses to FRIEDERIKE.

Stage begins to clear.

Citizen. [*Aside to FRIEKE.*] Glaube.

Frieke. [*Curtseying, and signing to door, L. U. E.*]
You are late, sir. The brethren are all assembled.

Cit. [*Aside.*] Does St. Hulda preach to-night?

Frieke. Ay, sir; I hope to hear her myself, when we have closed the house.

Cit. Have a care—our enemies are many.

[*Exit, L. U. E. Stage clears. Exeunt SOLDIERS last, laughing and singing, R. U. E.*

Stage clears, leaving MAX and FRIEKE.

Max. [*Coming down.*] Frieke!

Frieke. Well?

Max. Did you hear what the soldiers were saying?

Frieke. Yes. They were agreeing I was the comeliest wench they'd seen since the wars!

Max. [*Furious.*] Who said that? Which of 'em—eh? Which of 'em?

Frieke. Max, you're jealous.

Max. Jealous! No—but all soldiers are goats.

Frieke. Hush! You were a soldier yourself once, Max, but what else were they saying?

Max. That Prince Otho is on the road to Halle to arrest St. Hulda.

Frieke. Well, let him go to Halle, he'll not find her there.

Max. But Mindenburg is on his line of march—if he were to call here, Frieke, what should we do?

Frieke. Nothing.

Max. [*Pointing to door, L. U. E.*] But St. Hulda?

Frieke. Hold your tongue, jay bird, hold your tongue that's all you've got to do. [*Goes L. U. E.*] Leave the rest to me.

Max. Ah! [*Scratches his head.*] A widow thinks she knows everything, but she don't.

[*Knock off R. U. E.*

Frieke. [*Starting.*] What's that?

[*Runs down to MAX.*

Max. [*Calmly.*] Nothing.

[*Knock repeated.*

Frieke. [*Catching his arm.*] Oh, Max—if it should be Otho, what shall we do?

Max. Why, hold our tongues, to be sure.

[*Strolls slowly up, L. U. E.*

[*Knock repeated.*

Frieke. I can't—I can't—I want to scream.

[MAX opens door.

Enter KNIPPERDOLLING and STORTEBEKER.

Knip. Why close your doors so early, pretty mouse?

Frieke. [*Curtseying.*] So please you, sir.

Stort. "Your Worship," dame, "Your Worship." Master Knipperdolling has been elected Burgo-master.

Frieke. Oh! [*Curtseying.*] Your Worship, pardon, your Worship.

Knip. [*Chucking her under the chin.*] There's no offence, my pretty one. [*To MAX.*] A bottle of Johannisberg.

[*Exit MAX, L.*

We have friends that follow us and would have supper.

Frieke. Supper, your Worship? It grows late.

Knip. And will be later yet before we part, for we are frolicsome, my mouse. A little fellowship, a little feasting. Oh! I can be Belshazzar an I choose—a little "clink-clink," and man becomes a brother, eh, Stortebeker? But what for supper?

Stort. Something light and luring.

Enter MAX with wine.

Knip. A sucking pig, eh? with an onion in his belly and cherries in his mouth—eh? Preserved cherries, mouse—dip 'em in treacle and temper 'em with brandy for the stomach's sake, eh?

Stort. A dream—a dream!

Max. [*Aside.*] Nightmare, I hope!

Frieke. [*Curtseying.*] I'll do my best, your Worship.

Knip. [*Patting her cheek.*] Mouse!

[MAX sets wine on table abruptly.

Frieke. [*Beckoning MAX.*] They will be here all night. We must warn the brethren!

Max. [*Glancing at KNIP.*] Hog's flesh!

[*Exeunt FRIEKE and MAX, L.*
Knip. (*Helping wine.*) Stortebeker, "Ourselves!" God bless us!

Stort. Amen! You've done it at last, your Worship!

Knip. A little burrowing, a little policy. Oh! I can be a politician an I choose—a little "Hum, hum," and here I am, the Burgomaster.

Stort. Thanks to your good brother-in-law.

Knip. [*With sudden fervor.*] If I could commit Manteuffel to six months' imprisonment I would die happy.

Stort. He never forgave you for marrying his sister.

Knip. Ha, ha! a little romance—a little rhyming. Oh! I can come the poet an I choose—a little "tra-la-la,"—and the widow was mine.

Stort. And the finest wool-trade in Mindenburg to boot.

Knip. No, Stortebeker, no. Manteuffel manages that. It's "Brother, what o' the market?" and "Brother, what o' the books?" and "Brother, what o' the balance?" And if I need a groschen I have to go to "Brother" for it; *I*, the Burgomaster of Mindenburg!

Stort. Ah, but you owe that honour to him.

Knip. Wormwood! wormwood! I shall be his creature in the Rathhaus too. I dare not offend him and his party.

Stort. The Purity Party!

Knip. Oh! if I could commit Manteuffel for——

Stort. Hush! Here come the others!

Enter KONRAD, NIKOLAUS, and FRANZ, R. U. E.

Knip. Welcome, gentlemen, welcome! Be seated. Supper is on the way. A little sucking

pig with an onion in its belly and cherries in its mouth—will't suit the occasion?

[*General and greedy approval from BURGHERS, who sit at the table.*

Nik. That was a fine speech of yours from the chair, Burgomaster.

Knip. A little eloquence, a little fire. Oh! I can be a Cicero an I choose—a little “Phew,” and the thing is done.

Nik. What were your words, “Peace and purity, but no Protestors here?” That was a fine thing to say.

Knip. Politic, eh? Profound, eh?

Nik. Ay, indeed, for Maurice of Saxony has imprisoned his Protestant father-in-law.

Knip. [*Aside.*] Would it had been my Catholic brother-in-law.

Nik. And declared for Order and Orthodoxy.

Franz. They say the Emperor is using his Spanish soldiers to stamp out heresy in Germany.

Nik. With Prince Otho at their head.

Knip. Ah! I remember when the Prince was only Earl the Bastard, eating the bread of charity at the late Baron's Schloss.

Nik. And now he is the Emperor's own favorite, a hard man, a hard and cruel man.

Franz. And it will go hard with the Protesters, or I'm no butcher.

Nik. Well, well, we may have 'em here yet.

Knip. Never! A little firmness, a little force. Oh! I can be the Draco an I choose—a little “Ugh, ugh,” and the matter's settled.

Nik. I don't know—St. Hulda is at Halle.

Franz. And who is St. Hulda?

Knip. A dangerous, disturbing, disordering Protester.

Her. The people worship her.

Nik. But wherefore “St. Hulda”?

Franz. I don't know—ask the bookman here.

Kon. 'Tis an old German myth. Hulda was the Saxon Diana, the gentle, pure moon-maiden whose kingdom lay in children's hearts—and those she loved the most she gathered i' the bud, setting their little souls as stars around her silver throne.

Franz. Oh, that's it, is it? But what about supper, eh?

Enter MANTEUFFEL, R. U. E.

Enter FRIEKE and MAX with supper, L.

Omnes. Ha! ha! it comes! it comes!

Man. [Down R.] Brother John, good evening!

Knip. [In weak voice.] Brother Manteuffel—welcome!

Man. Does my sweet sister know of this?

Knip. No, brother, but she will.

Man. Yes, verily, she shall.

Knip. Wilt sit with us at supper?

Man. These carnal joys are not for us, my brother. The Protester is knocking at our gates—he charges us with corruption, concupiscence, and unclean living. He calls for reformation. He is right! We need reformation from within!

Franz. We've nothing within to reform yet.

Man. What have we to do with belly-lures? Sausages, herrings, prunes, and sauerkraut! Oh, shame of Baal Peor! Put them away, my brother, put them away.

Knip. [Weakly.] Put them away!

[FRIEKE removes them.]

Man. A sucking pig! Shall we who fight for purity pander to a sucking pig? Remove the beast; it's unclean!

Knip. [Weakly.] Remove the sucking pig.

[FRIEKE removes it.]

Man. Let us not tarry! Thy loving wife awaits thee, brother.

Knip. My loving wife! [*Finishes glass.*] God bless her! Let us go! [*All rise.*]

Man. What, go you too, gentlemen? Ah, better so, better so! Purity, gentlemen, purity!

Franz. Good night all!

Man. Come, my brother, home. Ghostly comfort waits us there.

Knip. I yearn for it, I yearn!

[*Exeunt* BURGHERS.]

Frieke. [*Clapping hands.*] Oh, merciful deliverance! I thought they would be here till day-dawn! Clear, Max, clear!

[*Max clears and exits with things, L.*]

Enter KNIPPERDOLLING *stealthily.*

Knip. Send not the reckoning home. I'll call myself to-morrow.

Frieke. [*Smiling.*] I understand, your Worship.

Knip. [*Approaching her.*] Fie! fie! You are a sprightly creature.

Frieke. Oh, your Worship, you frighten me!

Knip. [*Arm round waist.*] Mouse! The Burgo-master is your friend.

Frieke. Can I trust your Worship?

Knip. [*Kissing her.*] As I am a man—

Enter MAX, L.

—and a magistrate, I say—I said Magistrate—I would fain be thy Protector.

Man. [*Off.*] Purity, gentlemen, purity!

Knip. Perdition! [*Exit, R. U. E.*]

Max. [*To her fiercely.*] Why did you let him kiss you?

Frieke. Will not soap and water rectify the sin?

Max. I hate you, and I've done with you forever. I'll to the wars again, and not come back till I am dead and buried!

Frieke. Yes, go, Max, go and leave me to fight for the Cause as best I may! We are harboring St. Hulda at the risk of our lives. If it were known that she is at this moment preaching to the Brethren in yonder loft, my house would be forfeited and I should be thrown into gaol. You had better go, and that speedily, before we are arrested!

Max. Oh, call me a coward! Why did you let him kiss you?

Frieke. How could I help it—an old man too!

Max. They are the worst!

Frieke. Bald-headed!

Max. A mark of the beast!

Frieke. And the priest, Max.

Max. And last week I saw the Baron Heinric kiss you.

Frieke. [*Indignantly.*] For the good of the house—and he's only a boy!

Max. A boy! I believe he was a man before he cut his teeth! A wine-bibbing, wench-loving, law-breaking rake-helly, who respects neither God nor woman. Boy indeed! But they're all boys or old men with you.

Frieke. Yes—all except one. Oh, Maximilian, you've the heart of a lion, but the head of a sheep—sit down and be sane.

[*She sits, and MAX sits by her and tries to take her hand.*]

I said be sane! Now, Hulda——

Max. St. Hulda! Ah, God bless her! And it was you who brought her here! Where did you meet her, Frieke?

Frieke. Oh, long before I knew you or Mindenburg. Eight years ago, come Christmas time, I found her wandering in the snow and brought her unto Luther. Poor child, poor child! a girl in years, a woman in her suffering.

Max. Suffering? What do you mean, Frieke?

Frieke. [*Confused.*] Mean? How? Why, her father and her brother's were leaders of the Peasants' Secret League. They were betrayed by treachery, and hung before her eyes. But that's a secret, Max—you'll never breathe it to a soul?

Max. I'd slit my tongue before I said a word that might cause Hulda pain.

Frieke. The past is done with, but what about the future? Otho hunts for her hard by, and the new Burgomaster threatens here.

Max. Bide events, bide events! St. Hulda—Heaven bless her!—hasn't been amongst us a week yet, and already the common folk are hers to a man. Before long we'll have the Councillors on our side, and maybe the Burgomaster too.

Frieke. [*Touching her cheek.*] By this same token, Max.

Max. [*Grimly.*] And the spendthrift Baron Heinric, eh?

Frieke. [*Laughing.*] I fear he's past salvation. But as for the others, who knows? St. Hulda would tell us to have faith, that is what she always preaches—it is the text of her sermon to-night. Let us go in and hear her. [*Up L. U. E.*] But mind, I will not have you hold my hand—till sermon time—it is disturbing. Come!

[*Loud knocks and horn off R. U. E. FRIEKE runs to and MAX clings to his arm.*]

What's that? Max! Max! 'Tis Otho!

[*Knocks repeated. MAX opens the door, and enter ERNST, blowing horn, and followed by ULRIC.*]

Ernst. Supper, supper for six.

Ulric. The Baron Heinric has been wounded by a bear, and will rest awhile on his way to the Schloss. Quick! here he comes—wine and supper, quick!

[*Exit MAX.*]

Enter HEINRIC, carried sedan chair-wise, by JOACHIM and GEORG. The friends whoop and cheer noisily.

Hein. Nay, set me down, good friends, for I can walk. I am but bruised, not broken; the only plaster that I need is supper, and that badly! [*Sees FRIEKE.*] Ha! ha! my little mother.

Frieke. [*To him, curtseying.*] Oh, my lord! you are not hurt?

Hein. Just enough for the gossip, but not enough for the grave-digger, little mother. How fares it with you?

Frieke. Well, so please my lord.

Enter MAX with wine.

Hein. But still wearing of the weeds! [*Takes wine from MAX.*] Here's to a new true man for thee!

Frieke. Once bit, twice shy, my lord.

Hein. Twice kissed, thrice bold, little mother! [*Kisses her; bus. for MAX.*] And now set us a supper in your cosy closet.

Frieke. Oh, my lord, I fear our larder, for we did not look for noble company, and the hour is late.

Hein. Tut, tut, little mother! we bring the best of sauce—a hunter's appetite. Away!

[*Exeunt MAX and FRIEKE.*]

Ulric. [*Producing dice.*] And while we wait, I'll have one throw with thee.

Hein. I'm with thee, Ulric. [*They begin to play.*]

Enter LIESE and MARTE, R. U. E., laughing and chattering.

Ernst. [*Suddenly rousing.*] Ha, ha, the little angels!

Ulric. [*Aside, disgusted.*] Bah! These women! Love and hazard never did agree!

Hein. Liese! Marte!

Liese. La! But we heard you were a-dying!

[*Stands by him.*]

Hein. [*Shakes dice and throws laughingly.*] Not yet! [*Wins.*] Liese, you bring me luck!

Ernst. [*Solemnly beckoning to MARTE.*] Come!

[*MARTE sits by ERNST.*]

Liese. [*Laughing.*] I always bring my true love luck!

[*Caresses him.*]

[*They play in silence.*]

They are cheating you, Heinric; *Ulric* lost fifty crowns to your last throw.

Ulric. Do not interrupt the game, baggage! it confuses me. Whose is the throw?

[*They play again in silence.*]

Liese. Marte, that crown was mine.

Marte. It was my stake.

Enter OTHO, R. U. E., with OFFICER and two SOLDIERS unobserved. He signs to them to be silent and stands watching the gamblers in the red firelight.

Liese. I put it there!

Marte. You lie—it's mine!

Liese. [*Passionately.*] Give it me!

Marte. I won't!

Liese. Cheat, cheat, I'll have it! [*Dashes at her.*]

[*Confusion. MEN rise and restrain them.*]

Hein. Girls, girls, you are for love, not war!

Marte. She called me——

Liese. She stole my——

Hein. Peace, peace!

Otho. You are gay to-night.

Hein. Karl!

Ulric. Prince Otho! [*All rise—pause.*]

Hein. [*Confused.*] Your Highness! I forgot, sir——

Otho. [*Taking his hand.*] No, you only remembered your sometime playfellow?

[*They bring a chair forward. OTHO sits and waves HEINRIC, C., to chair beside him; others stand.*

Ulric. [*Fawning.*] Welcome once more to Mindenburg, your Highness. When we hear from time to time of your Highness's illustrious exploits and splendid career, we are very proud to think your happy childhood was spent within our gates, though doubtless your Highness forgets us now.

Otho. [*Drily.*] I remember you, Count Ulric, very well. Have you a kerchief? Ah! perfumed, and of lace. You were always dainty, Count. I remember once at the full board you made a pretty jest at my coarse linen. 'Twas clean and neatly mended, and at the time I thought the laugh unjust!

Ulric. [*Confused.*] I—I—forget the incident, your Highness.

Otho. Ah! I do not. Karl the Bastard never forgets—his friends. But see, my mud-stained boots disgrace this gentle company. I pray you look to it.

Ulric. I'll go fetch a clout, sir.

Otho. [*Giving kerchief back.*] I never use coarse linen now; pray you take this. [*He stretches out his boot. ULRIC kneels and wipes it and throws the kerchief away.*] Nay, Count, pick it up; pick it up and wear it as a keepsake of a prince's memory! [*To Heinric.*] But tell me of yourself. It was only the news of your accident that stopped me on my march to Halle. I heard that you were badly hurt—

Hein. A bruise, sir—a mere bruise. But you must see the boar—the biggest ever brought to Mindenburg. We'll have him shown at supper, sir, if you will honor us.

Otho. Nay, Heinric, I must on to Halle.

Hein. So urgent, sir?

Otho. On the Emperor's own quest. I hope ere sunrise to have arrested the mad preacher, Hulda!

Hein. Is she so dangerous?

Otho. If I can but lay hands on her she'll trouble us no more! The Emperor has sworn to crush this damnable dissent throughout all Germany.

Hein. We shall not trouble your Highness much at Mindenburg.

Gents. [*Together.*] No, no; we need no reformation here!

Otho. [*Drily.*] So I see; yet, gentlemen, I would not boast! This restless fever of reform is as catching as the plague, and takes strange victims. Know you Lady Bertha of Berlin?

[*All laugh.*]

Hein. Who did not know her, sir? First in the field, fairest at the Court, boldest at the dice, free with her favours as the summer sun, the maddest, merriest, most daring dame in Saxony.

Otho. [*Drily.*] Ay, she has been bitten!

Gents. What?

Hein. A Reformer?

Otho. Worse--reformed! A pervert of St. Hulda; and she's but one of thousands who have caught this itch of reformation and have found a "conscious heart."

Hein. Now, may the good Lord keep that "conscious heart" from our dear maids at Mindenburg when next we go a-Maying.

Georg. Amen! Amen!

Ernst. [*Aside.*] I have a conscious stomach which tells me it's supper time.

Hein. [*Laughing.*] A woman with a "conscious heart" can be no friend to man! What says your Highness?

Otho. If this derelict craft of love may speak, it has outgrown your welcome wench. I owe everything to this same "conscious heart."

Hein. How so, sir?

Otho. You remember the pleasant plot which I unmasked ten years ago?

Hein. Well, sir, we seemed on the brink of another rising as bloody as that of '24.

Otho. That discovery was the turning point in my career, for it brought me into the imperial presence. I was a twelve-month tracing out that plot, living amongst the peasants as Sigbert the Fowler, one of themselves. It was a strange life.

Hein. But the conscious heart, sir?

Otho. Ah, yes! While staying close to Nuremberg, I met a little peasant with a conscious heart, the sweetest, sauciest, most saintly little Protestant that ever prayed with tears against temptation, yet laughed to meet it at the lychgate after church. The old Eve was stronger than the new Evangel. I won that heart, and it was she who told me of the plot.

Hein. Who was she, sir?

Otho. The daughter of old Kunz, the ploughman, leader of the Peasants' Secret League. Her name was Katchen.

Hein. What became of her?

Otho. I often wonder. I would I knew! After her father and her two brothers had been seized and—and put away, I sent for her. She had fled, and we could find no trace of her. Poor Katchen! [*Rising.*] Gentlemen, a parting toast—to “Katchen of the Conscious Heart.”

Hein. [*Aside.*] Poor Katchen! [*All drink.*]

Otho. Heinric, one word with you. Gentlemen, good-night!

[*At a sign from OTHO, OFFICERS and SOLDIERS all exeunt, bowing, except OTHO and HEINRIC.*]

Trust not these harpies and these harlots!

Hein. Sir, they are my friends.

Otho. [*Drily.*] Ah! I hear your fortune is much pinched.

Hein. [*Laughing.*] Pinched, sir! 'Tis squeezed to the last drop.

Otho. [*Laying hand on him.*] I have never forgotten you were good to me.

Hein. No, no! I loved you, Karl!

Otho. Ay, you loved Karl the Bastard. You see that wound is healed, and I can show it with a laugh; but in those days it hurt, it hurt! Mine was a cruel schooling, Heinric—the covert sneer, the contemptuous patronage, the supercilious charity of little men like Ulric and his provincial peers. It hardened me, it hardened. But you—you always treated “the Bastard” as your equal.

Hein. No, Karl, as my superior. You knew the lure to tempt the freckled trout; you knew the snare to lift the greedy pike; you'd call the curlew, whistle plover from their circling flight; you knew the otter's lair, the eagle's nest, the chamois' haunt—in all the mysteries of wood and water-ways you were my tutor and my king.

Otho. [*Laughs.*] And now, instead of birds and beasts and fishes, I'll teach you how to trap their master—man.

Hein. [*Laughing.*] I was never a checkerman. In our winter-fireside games you always gave me a queen, and a beating!

Otho. We'll not play against each other; we'll play against the world. Wilt come with me to Court?

Hein. To Court, Karl?

Otho. Ay, to Court. We'll climb Fame's ladder side by side.

Hein. Give me time to think, sir.

Otho. No, I will fetch
You after Halle. You shall come with me,
And serving me shall serve your own regard,

[*Rises.*

Heinric, we stand in roaring times when men

May carve their names across the Continents.
 Our Germany has quickened with new life,
 Her pangs come sharper with each hour ;
 None know what her fierce labour may bring forth,
 But at a nation's yearning time the wise
 Man plays the midwife to his own design,
 And mine is—— *[Breaks off with a laugh.*

First to catch this saintly eel.

Twice have my fingers closed on her to find
 That she is gone! But not again! I know
 That's she at Halle; if she breaks this way,
 Take her, good Heinric, take and hold her fast!

Hein. *[Laughing.]*

Saints are not of my sort, but if she comes,
 I'll cleave to her with all the Devil's grip.

Otho. Do, and your future is assured!

[Exit OTHO, R. U. E. HEINRIC looks after him.]

Hein. A good friend and a grim enemy! I would
 rather serve than cross you, Prince. Ho, Ulric,
 Georg!

*Enter ULRIC ERNST, GEORG, JOACHIM, LIESE, and
 MARTE, L.*

Drink to my reformation; the Prince would make
 a courtier of me.

Joac. Has he gone?

Liese. La, how he frightened me! He looked as
 ugly as the lazar house!

Marte. And as cold as the grave!

Ulric. Bastard!

Hein. *[Cup in hand.]* A full purse, a proud
 position. Farewell to this provincial poverty!
 Hail, Royal Patronage! Toast me, friends, my
 fortune's made.

*[All drink. Enter MAX, L. He steals up towards
 door, L. U. E.]*

Hi! Max!

Max. [Turning confused.] My lord!

Hein. Why is not supper served?

Max. It is on the way, my lord. [*Aside.*] I must warn the brethren; if they raise the even song before we get these roysterers away, we are all lost.

Enter FRIEKE, L.

Frieke. My lord, the supper waits.

[*Applause and general laughter.*]

Hein. Good news! Come, girls, who'll queen the board?

Liese. [*To him, R.*] Me, me!

Marte. [*To him, L.*] Me, me!

Hein. Me, me! Me, me! Judgment of Paris! But I'll take you both, Black Beauty and White Wickedness! [*Takes their hands.*] 'To supper all!

[*Hymn heard off. All pause. MAX and FRIEKE look at one another; bus.*]

Frieke. [*Aside.*] The hymn! And Otho scarce beyond the yard. They're lost.

Hein. Friederike, what is that?

Frieke. That! What, my lord?

Hein. That!

Joac. 'Tis one of Luther's hymns.

Georg. Reform has reached us e'en at Mindenburg.

Ulric. [*Pointing to D. L. U. E.*] And they are there!

Hein. Friederike!

Ernst. [*Catching up hunting horn.*] I'll blow them such a trump they'll think it is the last!

Hein. No, no! Grace before meat—let's join the Gospellers! What say you, merry nuns and Bully acolytes?

[*General laughter and assent.*]

Frieke. My lord, my lord, these poor folk are in earnest.

Hein. [*Laughing.*] Earnest, little mother! earnest! So am I! Are the Protestants to do all the protesting? By Bacchus, no! We'll protest against this gloomy righteousness, this conscious heart, this ghostly hypochondria! We'll preach 'em a sermon [*hands on women*] in black and white straight from the Book of Life, with old Ernst there as an awful illustration, the Death's Head of Debauch! Come, boys, let's shame these murky moths with our gay butterflies! Whoop! [*Sings.*]

There's a pricket in the thicket,
 Rubbing velvet off his palms,
 Him we'll follow with a holloa,
 And the hunter's loud alarms!

[Dances off with the two women, followed by the rest laughing and singing.]

Frieke. We're lost, we're lost!

[Exeunt FRIEKE and MAX, following them.]

[Luther's hymn louder during dark change to Scene II.]

SCENE II. *Interior of a bare, whitewashed loft, with door and a few steps L., and a rude platform C., on which ST. HULDA is discovered. Immediately behind her head, back C., is a bull's eye window, which gives the effect of an aureole round her head. In front and round her stands a motley crowd, some richly dressed, some in rags, raising Luther's hymn, the last bars of which cease as the lights go up.*

Enter HEINRIC, L., followed by FRIEKE. The rest of the party peer in at the doorway. The congregation kneels as ST. HULDA delivers the final benediction.

St. Hulda. So peace go with you, and the steadfastness

And quiet exaltation born of Faith.

Faith is Man's one necessity; all else

A complement to that essential grace.
 For as a father to his growing son
 Shall suit advice to each development,
 So it may be God's messages are sent
 To march with human apprehensiveness,
 And the world sloughs its old belief to find
 An ampler creed beneath. Belief
 Is but the body of our thought, and mortal
 Faith is the soul, th' immortal lambent link
 Between Life's meaning and Death's mystery ;
 Words shall not fashion it nor works ensure.
 What man can tell his passion for his maid,
 What woman speak her yearnings for her babe?
 These things are felt, not phrased, and so with
 Faith,

Faith is the Pharos of our pilgrim race,
 Lost on the plains of Darkness and Dismay.
 Be yours that light—a pin-point in the dark,
 But steadfast as a star it shall not set,
 Till o'er the beetling hill-tops which have reared
 Fixed limitations to man's finite reach,
 The sluice of Dawn be lifted, and the flood
 Of God's illumination palpitates
 Above us, in us, of us—and we know !
 Dear Lord, I pray thee give Thy people Faith !

[A burst of mocking laughter from the party at the door, which FRIEKE hastily shuts in their faces.

HEINRIC stands transfixed.

Frieke. *[Creeping to his elbow.]* My lord, you'll not betray us to the Prince?

Hein. *[With his eyes still on HULDA.]* It is——
 Frieke. St. Hulda !

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

Six months are supposed to have elapsed.

SCENE: *A room in the "Golden Goose." All sweet and fresh, but very simple. Bright summer morning. Long bow window, back looking into street. Door into street, L. C. B. Doors into house, R, and R. U. E. Window, L. Table and chairs, R. Settee, L. Large oak chest, C. B.*

ST. HULDA *discovered at spinning wheel.* FRIEKE *busying herself at oak chest and singing.*

FRIEKE'S SONG.

A soldier grim from the war is home,
 And there's spring in the apple tree.
 A maiden laughs through the pink-lipped foam
 That is splashing the apple tree.
 In vain he seeks her heart to storm,
 She's hedged by blossoms white and warm,
 The flower must fall ere fruit shall form
 In the lap of the apple tree.

Frieke. My heart is full of song-birds this bright morn
 And you are silent, sister. Why so sad?

[*To her affectionately.*]

St. Hulda. My thoughts are with the snows of other days,
 What time you found me——

Frieke. Hush! Put it away!
 Put it away, dear sister, it is past.

St. H. Oh! but this cank'ring sense of secrecy,
 Of flash pretence, is eating out my heart.

It cripples me! It quells, e'en when the word
 Wells up in glad conviction, and I feel
 My people's heart beat pulse for pulse with mine.
 Satan will touch my elbow, whispering,
 "Tell them the past. Tell them of Nuremburg.
 Tell them thou'st lived in sin. Tell them the
 truth,
 Saint Hypocrite."

Frieke. What were the blessed words
 We read last night at pray'r? "Neither do I
 Condemn thee—go and sin no more."

St. H. At times
 I long to stand up in the market place
 And cry the truth!

Frieke. But Luther, knowing all,
 Still sent you forth to preach the word. He made
 You promise——

St. H. Aye, I hear his voice to-day,
 Deep with the dignity of tears unshed,
 As it swept through me in his dying hours:
 "Promiséd to keep thy peace. Not for thy sake,
 But for the weaker brethren. We fight

[*Luther's hymn heard sung by children in distance.*
 Not for the strong, but feeble. Keep thy peace."
 He stood so near to God, I promised him,
 And yet——

Frieke. You'll keep that promise, sister. Hark!
 [Hymn louder.
 The brethren greet you on your birthday!

[Hymn louder.
St. H. The children! [*Runs to the door, L. C. B.,
 and looks off.*] Yea, all the school—each with a
 bunch of hedge-row bloom tight in their tiny
 hands; and all wear favours like thine own.

Frieke. I made them all, and call them "Faith's
 Favours." The Brethren will march the streets
 to-day with them, to show that they are Hulda's
 folk.

St. H. How pretty! I must kiss you for the thought. [*Kisses her.*] And here they come. Come in—come in!

[*Enter CHILDREN and VILLAGERS, all wearing favours, also MAX, C. B. The CHILDREN run up and present their little posies of flowers. The VILLAGERS range themselves at back. The CHILDREN dance a country dance before HULDA, who watches them with delight, then suddenly, like a child, she herself joins in the measure. Serio-comic dance for HULDA and a tiny CHILD, which ends in HULDA'S catching her up and kissing her. OTHERS laugh and applaud.*

Voices. "Heaven bless you, Hulda!" "The Lord send you many happy birthdays." "Health and happiness to you!"

St. H. [*Moved.*] Thanks, thanks, good friends!

Max. So please you, dear Saint, some of us have a few trifles for your kind acceptance. Here be eggs and butter, a country cheese, a chicken, a chap,—home cured,—and good white bread.

[*The CITIZENS file past, giving their little presents.*

Printer. [*Forward, giving book.*] With the author's best wishes.

St. H. [*Reading.*] "Chats with the Devil, or Evenings in Hell." Is this for me?

Printer. Indeed it is! I wrote and printed it all myself. It is a rousing allegory, full of shocks and horrors. It ought to sell, but it don't. If you could mention it in your next sermon it might be helpful to the Brethren. You will find the printer's name on the title page.

St. H. Oh, yes, I see! I'll not forget.

Citizen. Here's a bottle of treacle water, lady. Made it myself. A certain cure for corns, warts, bunions, and flat feet. Maybe you suffer from such complaint?

St. H. Not just at present.

Citizen. [*Crestfallen.*] Oh, I am sorry! [*Brightening.*] But you may, you know. The flesh is heir to all ills—you may. I should keep it handy.

St. H. Indeed I will!

[*BOOTMAKER thrusts a pair of shoes into HULDA'S hands and sidles off.*

For me?

Boot. [*Nodding.*] I made 'em.

St. H. [*Putting on first one and then the other, walks proudly up and down.*] How grand! They feel familiar as old friends! How guessed you so exactly?

Boot. Dame Friederike stole me this.

[*Produces old shoe.*

St. H. Barabbas!

Boot. I'd like—if 'tis no offence—I'd like to keep it.

St. H. It's worn out.

Boot. [*Putting it in breast.*] Aye—walking heavenwards!

Old Woman. An' here be a little something I ha' worked wi' my own hands to keep 'ee warm come Christmas time.

[*Unfolds a woollen cape of hideous colors and design.*

St. H. [*Aghast.*] How—how wonderful!

Old W. Aye, aye, I chose the wools myself, an' a nice large pattern, as my sight ain't what it was fifty years ago.

St. H. [*Putting it on.*] It's very soft and warm.

Old W. [*Proudly.*] Aye, aye! I always wear the like myself. [*Looking at ST. HULDA dubiously.*] Somehow, I don't know—somehow it looks a little gay. You don't think them colors seem owdacious, do you?

St. H. [*Kissing her.*] Fear not, dear mother—your work defies improvement.

Frieke. Now, neighbours, we've all our work to do, and so has Sister Hulda. Make good days.

Voices. [*Going.*] "Aye, aye, good-day!" "God bless you, sister," "Heaven send you many happy birthdays," etc., etc.

St. H. Dear friends, I know not how to thank you. Thank you all.

[*VILLAGERS go off, L. C. B. CHILDREN crowd round her.*]

And you, my little ones, I'll wear your flowers at school to-night. Till then—good-by!

Children. Good-by, good-by, dear Mistress Hulda!

[*Exeunt CHILDREN, L. C. B.*]

St. H. Well, Sister Frieke, and what news?

Frieke. The town Council sits this morning.

St. H. I know. I have been bidden to attend and learn their decision—whether I am to be suffered to remain or be expelled from Mindenburg.

Frieke. If the council listens to the people's voices, your safety is secured.

St. H. I fear our enemies will prevail.

Frieke. Nay, thy friends are just as numerous. They say it depends upon the Burgomaster.

St. H. The Burgomaster—"unstable as water."

Frieke. Oh, there is hope! The Burgomaster hath professed great admiration for me.

Max. [*At back—sardonically.*] Ha! ha! That's quaint!

Frieke. You! [*Turning.*] There, lazy-bones! get you to your taps at once!

Max. If that Knipperdolling comes here again, he'll leave feet foremost—for I'll kill him!

St. H. Have patience, Max, have patience! [*Taking favour off FRIEKE'S breast and pinning it on to MAX.*] There! Faith's favour: wear it as a token you trust her.

Max. Ah! Sister, you're an angel, and it's easy enough to believe in you. But she—she's a widow—and one's never quite sure. I do try to be

one of the faithful—indeed I do, dear Sister, but the faithfullest of the faithful hates to be fooled.

[Exit MAX.]

Frieke. I cannot tell why the good Lord made men and turkey-cocks at all—there's no peace when they're about. You see the mood Max is in; I daren't tell him the Burgomaster is coming here this morning, and that he's written poetry to me. Listen! [*Produces letter and reads.*] "To the widow of widows"—that's me!

" My heart's afire with sweet desire
And passion most disastrous,
Oh, Frieke, why may I not die
Upon thy bosom alabastrous !"

That's a pretty word, alabastrous! I like it. "I will be at thy private door at 12 o' the dial.—John." [*Laughs, and tosses letter on to the table.*] And so will I, and so will I—only I must get Max out of the house.

St. H. Oh, Frieke! Master Knipperdolling has a wife.

Frieke. Fear not. He shall return home unharmed, but I'll have his vote, for the Burgomaster's *mine!*

[*Exits laughing, R. ST. HULDA busies herself with presents.*]

St. H. My people's gifts! And I once cried aloud

There is no good on earth, no God on high!

[*HEINRIC appears at window, B. C., with flowers.*]

[*Reading on a present.*] "To St. Hulda." Ah! no saint, but a sad woman!

HEINRIC, entering L. C., comes down.

Hein. Alone, and on this day?

St. H.

Heinric, my lord!

Hein. [*Giving flowers.*] With birthday congratulations.

St. H. [*With cry of pleasure.*] Oh, how good!
And you remember'd—

Hein. That you loved the best
Of all the flowers the starry Edelweis.
I gathered it at dawn-time on the tops.
Wear it, sweet saint; it comes from snowlands pure
And lofty as thy soul. [HULDA turns.

Why wilt not wear it?

St. H. Not as a saint. Ah! which of us has
right
To such a name?

Hein. Then wear it, Modesty,
Not for the good in thee, but for the good
Thou callest forth in us. Thine influence
Sent me to seek the Edelweis on high.

St. H. I'll wear it at my heart in memory
Of Mindenburg. [*Sits at spinning wheel.*

Hein. Know you that it is six months
Since first you came?

St. H. Six months! So long as that?

Hein. So short as that, and yet it seems to me
As if it never could have been but thus.

St. H. It was midwinter then.

Hein. And now the warmth
Of summer skies.

St. H. And after flower, the fruit;
Then frost again.

Hein. Not while St. Hulda shines.

St. H. But she will have her passing like the rest.

Hein. Hulda, thou wilt not leave us?

St. H. Who shall say?

There is a story which comes back to me
From childhood's treasury. My father's way
Was on the deep, the captain of a ship,
Who, coming home would love to cosset me
Upon his knee before the winter fire,

And tell me stories of preposterous
Adventures on far seas. And of all tales
I most loved one that told how, after squalls
And tempests for six days, his battered ship
Lay rolling in the furrows of the gale—
For tho' the wind had swooned to breathless calm,
The shaken seas could not forget their moil.
My father had relieved the helm, seeing the crew
Were worn with sleepless nights, dispirited
Unto the verge of open mutiny—
Fresh water too ran low, and the salt meats
Bred scurvy and foul sores. "Let us put back,"
The sailors cried. "Death is our port ahead."
And as they lay adrift in misery,
The sport of tides, a wonder came to pass,
For on the spray-splashed deck—no man knew
whence—

There dropped a solitary storm-blown bird,
A wet-winged wanderer and sorry as themselves,
One sailor made to kill it, with an oath,
Out of sheer spleen, but father caught the waif
And warmed it at his heart and gave it food,
And at the setting of the murky sun
He cast the feathered pilgrim in the air,
And lo! it circled thrice around the ship,
Then settled on the mast, and lifting up
Its breast, burst out in passionate melody,
A song so sweet and clear, the watch awoke
Their weary mates to listen. And one said,
"It is from home." Another, "'Tis from God!"
And all in whisper, "'Tis a miracle!"
And through the livelong night the small bird sang
Her starlit song—and harps were in the air—
Yet when the morning broke the bird was gone—
But courage fell upon the listless crew,
And on the seventh day they sighted land.

Hein. A fairie tale. What brings the fable
home?

St. H. I am a bird of passage.

Hein.

Dullard I!

You mean that Mindenburg was as the ship?

St. H. And you the captain who received the bird.

Hein. [*To her.*] Which will not leave us?

St. H. Not before day breaks.

Hein. And then?

St. H. The swallow must go further north,
Preaching the word of summer on the text
Of spring.

Hein. Nay, but e'en swallows build their nests
At last!

St. H. In divers places. One will find
Her rest beneath the roof of man: another
God's house affords the shelter of His eaves.

[*Seeing his face.*]

Nay look not sad.

Hein. [*Taking her hand tenderly.*] Hulda!

St. H. [*Withdrawing her hand hastily.*]

My hands are rough and scarred with needle-frays.
[*Looking up smiling.*]

Your saint is but woman after all.

Hein. The more saintly for her sex. I hate
To see those toilsome scars.

St. H. I work to live.

Hein. But why such menial work? How many
times
Have all the Brethren beseeched thee take
Some contribution for your daily needs?

St. H. [*Smiling.*] A Jewish gentleman once
broke his nails

Tent making.

Hein. Nature never meant the vine
Of womanhood to carry its own weight
Alone. It can but crawl the earth,
Stretching its wistful tendrils to the weeds.
Give it support, and lo! it will o'ertop

The sterile standard with a crown of frond,
And compliment of fruit.

St. H. But if the vine
Should choose support, deeming as heart of oak
What is but touch-wood, so that when the vine
Be heavy with its fruit her standard snaps
And fails her, and she finds the cluster's wealth,
Which she had raised in joy to Heaven, dashed
To Earth?

Hein. She knows by instinct, brave from base.

St. H. Not always—till too late!

Hein. [*To her.*] Ah! fear not that!
I know I am unworthy, but not false.
I would not fail thee though we stood alone
Accursed by all the world.

St. H. [*Moving.*] My lord—my lord—

Hein. Raise not that futile barrier. Were I
A king, thou still wouldst be my crown!

[*Catches her hand.*]

St. H. Let me go!

Hein. Give me thyself in holy custody,
Give me the right to fend thee through the world,
To bear thy burdens, fight thy fight through life,
Through death till God's deliverance, to wear
Thee as my wife.

St. H. [*Breaks away.*] You know not what you
ask—
It is impossible!

Hein. Impossible!

St. H. You could not love me if you knew—

Hein. Thou lovest
Another?

St. H. There is no such thing as love
For such as me.

Hein. Thou meanest thou hast a vow?

St. H. Aye so, a vow! A vow!

Hein. The Devil's vow
That would deny the love that God affirms.

Think'st thou the virgin purer than the wife?
 Think'st thou the mother lower than the maid?
 Or barrenness more beautiful than birth?
 Thou knowest it is not.

St. H. Love is not for me.

Hein. Prize it or spurn it as the worthless thing
 It is, my love is thine, as I am thine.
 Thou'st called me from the filthy byre of swine,
 The wallow of indulgence and gross deeds;
 Thou'st turned my feet toward the hill, my face
 Toward the light. Thou'st called me and I've
 come.

God sent thee to me. Send me not away.

St. H. [*Breaking away.*] Go! Go! You know
 not what you ask me. Go!

I am not what you think me. As you love me,
 Leave me, nor look upon my face again!

Hein. Hulda, Hulda! What have I said?

St. H. You take

Advantage of my weakness. I am worn,
 O'erstrung, my strength is squandered in attempts
 To comfort others, and you come to me—
 You whom I looked to as my guard and guide—
 And tempt me break my vow! Go, leave me!
 Go!

Hein. [*Pause.*] Hulda, forgive me! Take a vow
 for vow

Until thy work and mine shall be complete,
 Until the Cause, now cradled on thy breast,
 Hath grown beyond the need of motherhood,
 Until the hour that Germany is free,
 I will not speak to thee of this again.

St. H. Heinric!

Hein. [*To her.*] Thou canst trust me?

St. H. [*Giving hand.*] Until death!

Hein. Nay,

Till victory, and then——

St. H. No, never that.
 What has been has been, though God always is.
 Oh, but I do deceive thee. Hear the truth
 It stifles me—turn from me, for I am—
 I am—Heinric, help!

[*Puts handkerchief to her mouth and falls.*

Hein. [*Catching her.*] Hulda? Blood!

[*Carries her to chair.*

Speak, Hulda—speak!

St. H. [*Recovering, but half-unconscious.*]

Father, I did not know!

No, no, don't curse me! Brothers, speak for me!
 You loved him too. You brought him to our
 home.

You praised his courage and his grace. You called
 Him friend, and I—I trusted him. Oh, God!

I trusted him, and he will spare your lives.

You know not all. He must—he *must!* Don't
 look

At me like that, father—

Hein.

Hulda!

St. H. [*Recognizing him.*]

Heinric!

What is 't?

Hein.

Thou wert struck down.

St. H.

Aye so. I know.

This happened once before at Nuremburg!

They warned me of recurrence. Nay, 'tis past.

[*Smiling.*] Give me some wine.

[*He fetches some from the sideboard to table. She drinks.*

I must to the Rath-haus.

Hein. Thou art not fit to—

St. H. [*Smiling.*]

Nay, fear not. I bend

Where others break.

[*Tries to rise, but sinks back.*

Hein.

You see! Dear Sister, rest!

I'll to the Rath-haus to prepare the way.

I'll speak for thee and for our common faith.
 Courage, dear Hulda, courage! I'm with thee,
 And God with us.

St. H. [*Rising.*] Aye, go—I'll follow thee.
 See, I am strong again—there is no time
 To lose. Thy people need thee. Haste!

[*Exit HEINRIC, L. C.*]

Weak, weak and wicked. I foresaw the end,
 And lied unto myself. Lied when I said
 It could not be. Lied to my double self,
 Crying, "My soul is dead to earthly love."
 Knowing I lied, for even as I spake
 My woman's heart cried out as I have heard
 An infant's wailing cry waking at night
 To sudden loneliness. How can I preach
 The truth, with lips steeped in duplicity?
 How can I save my people, being lost
 Myself! Lost—lost!

[*Exit HULDA, R. U. E.*]

Enter FRIEKE with bunch of keys, R., followed by MAX, carrying lavender heads. FRIEKE unlocks and opens a chest, R. B.

Frieke. There! Put you the lavender in there.
 So! How sweet it smells. I feel that I could roll
 in it. [*Gives letter.*] Take this to Dame Christian—
 you know the house?

Max. Aye. 'Tis a long step from here.

[*Lays letter on table and assists FRIEKE.*]

Frieke. Not for your great legs. Ask for the
 sheets I lent last week, bring them back with you
 and lay them here. [*Arranges things in chest.*]
 Then lock the chest again. I'll leave the keys on
 their peg in the common-room.

Max. I'll not be long!

Frieke. [*Laughing.*] Can you trust me, Max?

Max. Yes, yes! I'll never be jealous again,
Frieke.

Frieke. You're sure?

Max. Quite sure! [*Makes to kiss her.*]

Frieke. No, no! Get you gone! Get you gone!
[*Sees him off* L. C. B.]

There, he's safe! I do believe there'd be a murder if he met the Burgomaster now. But I'll get that vote, or I'm no woman—or widow either!

[*Exit FRIEKE with keys.*]

Re-enter MAX hastily, L. C. B.

Max. Faith, I must be in love indeed! I've got a head on me like a riddle. Where did I put that letter? [*Picks up KNIPPERDOLLING'S letter.*] No, that's not it. [*Reads.*] "To the widow of widows." The widow of widows—that's Frieke? Who writes to Frieke? "John." John? It's Knipperdolling. And poetry! How dare he write poetry? "Oh, Frieke, why may I not die upon thy bosom alabastrous?" She's egged him on to this—she must have done. A man needs a deal of encouragement before he writes such poetry as this. But what a villain—with a wife at home, too! "I'll be at your private door at twelve o'clock o' the dial." So that's why I've been sent to Dame Christian's at the other end of the town! But I'll surprise 'em—I'll fall on them in their guilt. I'll—

[*KNIPPERDOLLING passes window and knocks softly.*
Tups and tom cats! That's he!

[*MAX gets into the chest and closes the lid, leaving one of the streamers of his favour outside.*
Enter FRIEKE, R. Knock repeated softly.
She opens D., L. C. B. Enter KNIPPERDOLLING.

Knip. We are alone?

Frieke. In sooth we are.

Knip. [*Kissing her.*] Mouse!

Max. [*Peeping.*] She struggles not nor screams!
Be calm! Be calm!

Frieke. [*Head on shoulder.*] Why do I love thee
so, Cony?

Max. [*Aside.*] Jezebel! Jezebel!

Knip. Many women have asked me that, Mouse.
'Tis a hard question to answer.

Frieke. And you love me, my lamb?

Knip. Honeysuckle! [*Kisses her.*]

Max. Slaughter him, slaughter him!

Knip. Thou'rt sure we are not watched, Mouse?

Frieke. Sure, Cony, why?

Knip. Methought I saw your hulking tapster as
I passed the window.

Frieke. It must have been your fancy, lamb.
I've sent him on an errand and he can't be back for
full an hour. [*Sees ribbon, goes up and examines it ;*
bus.] Heavens! [*Sits quietly on chest.*]

Knip. What is it, Mouse?

Frieke. [*Aside.*] He'll kill him before he has time
to vote!

[*Aloud.*] Nothing, Cony, nothing! Come sit
beside me. So!

Knip. [*Sitting on chest.*] So!

Frieke. [*Aside.*] Saved!

Knip. [*Arm around waist.*] I could sit so for
ever, Mouse.

Frieke. Could you? [*Aside.*] You would an
you knew what you were sitting on.

Knip. You must dismiss that fellow Max.

Frieke. The disbelieving Didymus. To spy on
on me! I'll swing him for't.

Knip. You wander, Chicken.

Frieke. [*Starting.*] Yes—no—dear Cony, I was
thinking.

Knip. The fool is jealous, Mouse, jealous of me.

Frieke. [*Coaxing.*] He must be a fool, Cony.

Knip. Oh, but I've seen him glare at me, just

so—as I'm a magistrate, an he do it again, I'll lock him up.

Frieke. The key is in the common room.

Knip. Eh? Not that I fear any man though he be as big as a house. A little carte, a little tierce, oh, I can be a whirlwind fencer an I choose. A little "Whit!" and he's dead meat. But there might be a scandal. Dismiss the fool.

Frieke. Indeed, I think I will, Cony. He's a suspicious eaves-dropping loon, with an eye to every chink and an ear to each keyhole!

Knip. [*Rising.*] Eh?

Frieke. [*Pulling him back.*] Sit down!

Knip. Sweet Mouse!

Frieke. I mean I feel secure when you sit thus.

Knip. But I must to the Rath-haus, Mouse.

Frieke. [*Coaxing.*] Aye, to vote for Hulda, Cony.

Knip. Hum, hum! There be difficulties, Mouse! Brother Manteuffel says——

Frieke. Oh, but you promised me!

Knip. Brother Manteuffel says——

Frieke. Oh, but you promised me! You remember, Cony. You promised me, when you kissed me in the passage and said you loved me and had had enough to drink. Don't you remember?

Knip. Maybe, maybe; I was premature.

Frieke. [*Rising.*] Oh! Oh! You do not love me!

Knip. [*Rising.*] Chicken, I swear——

Frieke. [*Pushing him back.*] Sit down!

Knip. You are abrupt, sweet Mouse.

Frieke. I'm not your Mouse. You love Manteuffel more than me.

Knip. I loathe Manteuffel. He's a devil and he makes me his imp! I'm a slave, a cypher, a banded dog in my own house.

Frieke. Vote for Hulda, and be free!

Knip. But Manteuffel says——

Frieke. If Manteuffel says anything, clap him in prison. [*KNIP. rises aghast ; she gently reseats him.*] The people are all for Hulda. Heinric is for Hulda, the Council is divided against itself. Declare for Hulda, Cony, and you will be the hero of the hour!

Knip. Oh, I could be a hero an I chose, but there's Otho——

Frieke. He's leagues away, fighting the Turks in Hungary.

Knip. Think you I could, in good sooth, imprison Manteuffel were I to turn Protester?

Frieke. To be sure, Cony ; he's a Catholic.

Knip. And load him with chains?

Frieke. 'Twould be the proper thing to do.

Knip. And fling him in a dungeon—a deep dungeon, Mouse, with toads and other reptiles?

Frieke. And a convenient grill i' the door, through which you could view him, Cony, and exhort him daily.

Knip. [*Rising.*] I'll vote for Hulda! I'm for the Reformation, especially at home! [*To door, L. C. B.*] Kiss me, Mouse.

Frieke. No-o, I'll sit me here, Cony, till you come back, and then—— [*Blows kiss.*]

Knip. [*Blows kisses—Aside.*] A little eloquence, a little earnestness. Oh, I can be the reformer, an I choose. A little “Ooh,” Manteuffel's in prison, and the widow mine.

[*Blows kisses and exits L. C. B. Repeats business through window and goes off.*]

Frieke. [*Watches him off, then down stage, off chest.*] You may come out now. [*Pause.*] Do you hear, Didymus? [*Lid opens slowly and MAX appears sheepishly.*] You?

Max. You knew that I was here?

Frieke. I saw you, or I could never have believed that a brave soldier and an honest man could play

the spy on the the woman he professed to love.
You can go! I've done with you!

[MAX scratches his head, gets slowly out of chest,
and goes slowly L. C. B.]

Frieke. You don't even say you are ashamed.

Max. [Pausing.] I'm a villain! [She nods.]
A damned disbelieving villain! [She nods.] I'm
not fit for you. [She shakes her head.] I deserve
to be whipped round the town.

Frieke. Twice!

Max. I'll go and hang myself.

Frieke. In lavender! Not yet. Hulda needs our
lives. Get thee to the Rath-haus, and after many
days, if thou canst learn an honest faith, perchance
I may forgive thee.

Max. Frieke!

Frieke. Go! get thee faith!

Max. I do believe, I *will* believe, that widows do
no wrong. [Exits L. C. B.]

Frieke. That's as it should be, honest Max. An
men have not faith in women, what should we do
with our frailties? Ah! My Lord!

Enter HEINRIC hastily, L. C. B.

Hein. Go, call St. Hulda, quick! I have spoken
for her and declared my faith. The Burghers who
were wavering are with us. Frieke, we shall win
the day! I've ordered men to every belfry tower,
so when the vote is given, chime upon chime shall
clamour Hulda's victory.

[Blare of trumpets. PRINCE OTHO and RETINUE
seen passing window.]

Frieke. Mein Gott! The Prince!

Hein. Come to arrest her.

[Knock at L. C. D.]

Frieke. Nay, he cannot know. Keep him,
Baron, keep him here until the Councillors com-

mit themselves; they cannot then go back or yield her up.

[*Knock louder.*]

I'll pass our sister through the stables.

Hein. Open—I understand. [*FRIEKE opens door. Enter OTHO. SOLDIERS line the street back.*]
Your Highness's health.

Otho. Heinric, I have been seeking you for full an hour.

Hein. Sire, had I expected you——

Otho. [*Laughs.*] I might be elsewhere. I am the unexpected. [*To Frieke.*] Let them wait without. You can withdraw. [*She courtesys and exits, R. U. E. OTHO lays hand kindly on HEINRIC'S shoulders.*] Well, what news?

Hein. Sir, I have no news for one who has met and mastered the Turkish Janisaries. The fame of your achievements has reached us even here.

Otho. [*Sits.*] We beat them; but it took six months to do it. They threatened Wein itself before I came.

Hein. We heard the Emperor dispatched you with scant notice, sir.

Otho. I had scarce reached Halle when His Majesty's message reached me bidding me go at once. Heinric, she escaped me yet again.

Hein. Who, sir!

Otho. The woman, Hulda.

Hein. Aye, sir, I know.

Otho. But you do not know I passed her on my march. She was at Mindenburg when I passed through.

Hein. Indeed, your Highness?

Otho. [*Rises and walks.*] And one of my fellows knew of it, and let her pass by.

Hein. [*Aside.*] True man! [*Aloud.*] Being a Protester, sir?

Otho. He was; but is not, for I hung him for his treachery.

Hein. Ah, yes, his treachery.

Otho. To be thrice foiled, and by a woman!

Hein. Sir, why let it rankle?

Otho. Nettles, nettles! But you are right! I came to Mindenburg to find a friend—not catch a foe! [*Sits.*] Heinric, the issue of this war has placed me first of all the King's High Councillors.

Hein. I hear that at Cologne the Emperor himself rode forth to meet you with the lords and ladies of the Court.

Otho. His Majesty was pleased to show marked favours. And one of the fairest ladies of the Court was an old friend of yours.

Hein. Nay, sir, I have no friends at Court.

Otho. Aye, one who often spoke to me of you.

Hein. Of me?

Otho. Mind you our little playfellow of school-boy days, the dark-eyed Wilhelmina!

Hein. Aye, sir, the only daughter of the Duke of Balve.

Otho. She hath a sweet and tender disposition, and a grace of body which a king might covet.

Hein. She was beautiful, as a child.

Otho. The flower hath passed the promise of the bud. [*Rises, crosses to him.*] Heinric, I come to bring you back with me as her accepted suitor.

Hein. I, sir, I?

Otho. Oh, pretty diffidence! Yes, Heinric, you!

Hein. But I am half a peasant.

Otho. Whose sires fought under Charlemagne.

Hein. Unknown.

Otho. But with a future.

Hein. Beggar'd of fortune.

Otho. No, Master Phœnix, for out of the ashes of your lost estates you shall arise with wider wings to shadow a whole province. King Charles is ever

lavish of reward to those who serve him well, and for my lucky victory he hath bestowed on me the richest province of the Rhine to have and hold in perpetuity. And to this hereditament I do appoint thee fief.

Hein. Sire!

Otho. It marches league for league beside the Duke of Balve's land. The Duke is very old—his only child a girl. The lands go with her, which, conjoined with yours, would make a little kingdom in the heart of fairest Germany. Well, what say you?

Hein. I—I am confounded. I know not what to say, lest I should seem ungrateful.

Otho. It is my pleasure, as it shall be yours.

Hein. Sire, I cannot take your bounty, for my love is pledged elsewhere.

Otho. [*Laughing.*] There speaks the simple country character! Man's love is a very wild cat, a vagrant gypsy, inconstant as the sky; affection is a house dog, a creature of habit, faithful to the fire, and very loth to wander for his food. Let the wildcat prowl the woods and poach what game he may—but keep a dog to watch the hearth at home.

Hein. The Duke of Balve champions the Pope.

Otho. Indeed he does. He boasts he has not left a Protester in his province.

Hein. Then I am outlawed there.

Otho. What mean you?

Hein. [*Rising.*] I have joined the Reformer's cause.

Otho. [*Rising.*] Heinric! Nay, nay! You jest!

Hein. For the first time in my life of lightness, sir, I am in earnest.

Otho. [*To him.*] How dare you tell me this? Do you not know?

Hein. Yes, sir, I know.

Otho. [*Restraining himself.*] Heinric, I do not threaten, I beseech.

An elder brother with his younger pleads,
For though our days be equal, I have hung
In the world's sun and ripened; while thy heart,
Hid in the shady bowers of Mindenburg,
Still wears the green of youth.

Hein. I have stept
From rust to revelation.

Otho. We've all felt.
That whirl of random urgency. Rack not
The wine at such a time. The drinking comes
When age has fined youth's fierce insistency.

Hein. I am no youth.

Otho. At heart a very boy!

Hein. I hold a man's ideal!

Otho. Let it go!
Ideals are for a woman, not for man
Whose sterner fingers grip the throat of fact.

[*Very earnestly.*]

By our dear comradeship, I pray you pause:
You will be dispossessed of all you hold;
Imprisoned, tortured, maybe put to death.

Hein. They may despoil me of my heritage,
May cripple freedom, snatch dear life itself,
One thing remains: they cannot take from me
The hallow of idea.

Otho. [*Drily.*] Who is it?

Hein. Sir?

Otho. The woman!

Hein. I spoke not of woman

Otho. But the woman speaks through you.

Hein. Aye, 'tis true,

A woman's purity has awoke my better self,
And human love is guide to holy Faith.

Otho. [*Laughing.*] Priapus, God of substance, not
idea!

Hein. Ah, sir, you do not know this woman's life. Will you not see and hear, before you judge?

Otho. Enough, enough! Such importunity O'erleaps respect. Think you to whom you speak?

Hein. Aye, sir, unto a powerful Prince, and just.

Otho. But pitiless. Trade not on past regard; Expect no mercy at our friendship's grave.

Hein. [*Bowing.*] I ask for nothing, sir, but leave to go.

[*Distant church bells to end of Act. Music.*]

Otho. What means those bells?

Hein. Saint Hulda's victory.

Otho. St. Hulda! Hulda here!

Hein. Aye, here!

Otho. And you—you dare to shelter her?

Hein. Aye, unto death!

Otho. Treachery! Treachery!

Duped—and by you!

Hein. I know what I have done,

I am with Hulda, sir!

Otho. Aye, fool, in gaol!

Ho, officer!

Enter OFFICER, L. E. Open door showing file of SOLDIERS in street. Music and cheering louder.

Hein. Too late, for Mindenburg Has spoken, and St. Hulda's cause is ours.

[*HEIN throws open window and looks out.*]

Look where she comes, white, wonderful, supreme,
The snowy crest of that wild human wave
Which surges roaring up the cobbled street!
See how grown men flock round to kiss her robes;
See how the women lift their babes to her,
With tears and laughter and great sobs of joy.
And she, a child, amongst the children walks,
With heart as fragrant as their own! Look, Prince,
She wears God's patent on her moonlit brows!

[*PRINCE to the window—starts.*]

Otho. [*Aside.*] Katchen! [*Aloud.*] That! that
—is not St Hulda!

Hein. Aye!

The woman I have asked to be my wife!

[*PRINCE looks at him curiously, and bursts into a
cruel, mirthless laugh. Picture. Forte Music
to*

END OF ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Room as in Act II.* FRIEKE *discovered.*
Enter MAX hastily, L. C. B.

Frieke. Well?

Max. Heaven grant it may be well. The Prince means mischief.

Frieke. Where is he?

Max. Still within the city.

Frieke. And his soldiers.

Max. Outside. The Baron Heinric hath closed the gates upon them.

Frieke. Oh, Max! If they should try and force the town?

Max. Heinric is ready, and we are his men to death.

Frieke. Hush! [*Enter ST. HULDA.*] You've heard the news, dear sister?

St. H. Yes, Frieke, we are put upon our trial.

Max. Fear not! we will not give you up.

St. H. I do not fear, good Max. If I am grave, 'tis not for self, but others. The sturdy men who will be lost; the wives who will be widows; the widows who will mourn their only sons before this day is won. Frieke, were I to dwell on war's despite, I should betray my heart and yield myself to Otho.

Frieke. Never, never! You do not know the man.

St. H. Mine eyes have never seen him, but mine ears are most familiar with his character.

Frieke. He is cruel and pitiless.

St. H. I know that well; it would not hinder me. It is the knowledge of my people's needs

which gives me stout resolve. My post is at the tiller; we must face the storm. I pray you fetch me Heinric, I would speak with him.

Frieke. I'll go fetch him, sister.

Max. Not alone. [*To her.*] The streets are dark and lonesome.

Frieke. I'm not afraid, but you may take my hand.

Max. [*Taking hand.*] Dear Frieke!

Frieke. I know, I know, perhaps you may outside.

[*Exeunt MAX and FRIEKE, L. C. B.*]

St. H. I'll weave no further on this loom of lies! Before he throws himself in Otho's path Heinric must know the truth. I'll tell him all, Aye, though he hates me for the thing I am.

[*Knock, L. C. B.*]

It's just, it's just! This is my punishment's Last crown of thorns!

Enter HEINRIC, L. C. B.

Hein. The city's gates are shut—
Thou'rt safe, dear one. Why, sister, tears? What is't?

St. H. [*Aside.*] The shame will kill me.

Hein. [*To her.*] Courage, dear sister
Fear not this Otho; we're 'twixt thee and him.
My men are thine, and while our blood still beats
'Tis thine to spend.

St. H. Not mine, not mine, but God's!
'Tis not for me you fight, but for the Cause.

Hein. Thou art the Cause.

St. H. No, no! I'm nothing—worse
Than nothing, a poor might-have-been. The Cause
Is what we strive for.

Hein. Aye, the Cause!

St. H. And yet
I am in doubt, perplexed. Advise me.

Hein.

I?

Who follow, not direct.

St. H.

But maybe soon

Our people's fate will rest with thee alone.

Hein. What mean you?

St. H.

Listen—nor judge too harshly.

It happened once—'twas long ago, she said—

That is, I knew a woman who once sinned

Because she loved with faith too strong for doubt.

Can there be room for such a thing as she

Within our fold?

Hein.

Why, sister, surely, yes,

If her repentance be sincere.

St. H.

You say so?

But no! Such sin as hers is past redeem,

Light pardon is half-sister to connivance.

She must stand separate—and yet, they say

This woman hath persuasive gifts and grace

To lead the people.

Hein.

Why must chastity

For ever lack the crown of charity!

May not the spirit's quality outweigh

The body's flaws?

St. H.

Think you 'tis so? Think you

Despite the past she still may hope to leave

The world the better for her coming? That

Were hope indeed. But think! She might but

harm

The Cause she seeks to serve. What if her past

Were published? Might the weaker brethren

Not deem her message vain, since she is vile,

As precious wine stored in a rancid cask?

Hein. Let her not fear. The greater Truth shall

rise,

Blotting the lesser as the sun and stars.

St. H. Thank God! All's easy now. And tho'

a just

Disdain and horror wipe me from thy heart,
The Cause is safe.

Hein. Why, Hulda——

St. H. Hear me out!

I—even I—whom you regard a saint——

Heinric—I am——

Enter MAX and FRIEKE hastily.

Frieke. Sister! Sister! Good, my lord, the citizens are crushing to the square.

Hein. What want they?

Max. An ounce of lead apiece, my lord.

Hein. A soldier's remedy. Let's first try arguments more easily digested. What call they for?

Max. For everything and nothing. Some call for Hulda to be given up; others defy the prince; others preach compromise, and each swag-bellied citizen is shouting his own remedy, and not a single listener to any one of them. The whole square's like a may-tide rookery, all halloa and no help.

Hein. I'll go to them.

St. H. I fain would speak with thee before thou go'st.

Frieke. [To HEINRIC, *aside.*] You must with us at once, my Lord.

The Burgomaster wavers, and would surrender our sister to Prince Otho.

Heine. Hush! I'll come at once. [To HULDA.] When I return, dear sister, I'll come for thee in a brief breathing space.

St. H. But Heinric——

Hein. Fear not. All's well. Come!

[*Exeunt* HEINRIC, MAX, and FRIEKE.]

St. H. He'll turn from me in loathing, but the Cause

Is safe; safer in his clean hands than mine.

I see the new life broaden down the years;

I see the new faith soar with Freedom's wing ;
 I see the children of another age
 Rejoice in wider circumstance of soul,
 And reap, to sounds of laughter and of song,
 The seed we sow in blood and tears to-day.
 I see hereafter's joy, as Moses saw,
 With eyne still aching from the desert's scald,
 "The Good Land" roll in verdure to the sea,
 That Land of Promise barred to him by sin.
 Ah! but he had his comfort, for he knew
 His great lieutenant would complete the work
 And lead his people home. Thank God, I too
 Have my brave Joshua, steadfast and strong!

[*Takes up HEINRIC'S roses and kisses them.* OTHO
seen at window back.

The Cause is in thy keeping. I can go
 Back to the desert and be seen no more!

[*Knock, L. C. B.*

'Tis he. Heinric, the Captain.

[*She crosses halfway to door. Enter OTHO, who comes down.*

Otho. [*Coming down.*] Katchen!

[*She crushes flowers to her breast, staring at him speechless. Pause.*

The thorns have pierced thy hands; there's blood
 on them. Give me the flowers. [*Toward her.*

St. H. Sigbert, the Fowler. What want you of
 me?

Otho. I sought an enemy: I find a friend.

St. H. Sigbert, the Fowler.

Otho. Nay, dear Katchen—

St. H. Katchen is dead.

Otho. Forgive me, I forgot! St. Hulda. [*Bows.*]
 The name's an inspiration. Who father'd the
 conceit?

St. H. Luther gave me that name.

Otho. How like the man! You knew him?

St. H. He called me from the grave.

Otho. You speak in parables.

St. H. Would you have the truth?

Otho. It is the only thing I never fear.

[*Sits, R. C.*

St. H. I would not stir the embers of the past.

Otho. Is there still warmth in them?

St. H. Banked fires oft smoulder at their core,
whose crust

Is cold. Stir the red caverns, you may see
Strange pictures i' the fire. A woman big
With sin—Oh, yes! why not? That came to
pass—

Deserted and alone—

Otho. I sent for you.

St. H. Aye! With my brother's and my father's
blood upon your head.

Otho. That was the law, not I.

St. H. Which you betrayed them to—through
me, through me!

Otho. It was my duty—but I loved you, Katchen!
I sought you far and near. Where did you hide?

St. H. I know not where I went or what I did;
The months went by in leaden pilgrimage;
My faltering feet were wand'ring with my wits.
That was God's mercy, for often as I lay
Under the kindly lee of some swart hedge
And stared into the freckled face of night,
A gentle madness ranged fantastic fields
In crazy comfort.

Otho. I would fain have spared you.

St. H. They say they found me crooning
lullabies

Over the still-born at my breast, while winter
In irony swathed us in Samite snows.
It was the time of visions and he came,—
Luther,—the rugged man of war, whose heart
Beat with a woman's throb. He took me home

Unto his wife, who cradled me to life.
 When I recovered, Luther, knowing all,
 Spake words with me and laid his hands on me.
 'Twas in the garden that he loved to tend,
 And with him sat his wife and little ones ;
 The west was still a-warm with after-lights,
 While on the eastern sky-line the new moon
 Whetted her silver edge ; which Luther saw
 And said : " Behold a sign, St. Hulda's sickle !
 Take thou the hook from Heaven's hand,
 Go forth a second Hulda, for the math
 Is ripe." With which he blessed me and I went,
 Leaving the past behind me.

Otho. Yet behold !

It comes to you again in friendly guise.

St. H. I knew that this would be. I've dreamt
 of this

O' night, I've dreaded it by day. I've borne
 The tension of imagination's wrack
 Until reality brings sheer relief.

Otho. I could not harm thee, Katchen.

St. H. No ; you can do me no more harm, Sig-
 bert, the Fowler.

Otho. Nay, St. Hulda, I too now wear another
 title. I am Otho, Prince of Halberstadt.

St. H. You ?

Otho. Is the change more Protean than your
 own ?

St. H. [*After pause.*] You have come to take
 me prisoner ?

Otho. No ; I come for Heinric.

St. H. Ah !

Otho. He has asked you to be his wife ?

St. H. I have told him I can never be his wife.

Otho. [*To her.*] You do not love him, Katchen ?

St. H. [*Facing him.*] It is because I love him
 this is impossible.

Otho. [*Drawing back.*] Ah ! You love him.

Yes, I understand—you love him. And love is a great cobbler of broken hearts. Yet the confession sounds somewhat strange, from you to me. [ST. HULDA *laughs bitterly.*] Well, well, we'll let that pass. I have come for Heinric.

St. H. Why?

Otho. Sit down and I will tell you. [*She sits.*] I will not see him led thus blindly to his ruin. Yes, ruin, for your cause is doomed. Maurice of Saxony has joined the King.

St. H. I know it.

Otho. I have come to take Heinric back with me to Court. A noble marriage waits him there—wide lands and high position. You bar his future: if you love him you will give him up.

St. H. He is free to go.

Otho. Your influence has bound him hand and foot. You alone can set him free.

St. H. He is free to marry whomso'er he will. There's not a night but that I pray with all my heart Heaven may send him a wife who shall be worthy of his love.

Otho. [*Towards her.*] That is impossible so long as he remains a Protestant. [*Movement for ST. HULDA.*] Nay, listen! you must not only give him up, you must send him back to us.

St. H. [*Rising.*] Rob him of faith?

Otho. You must send him back to us.

St. H. Never, never! I have resigned his love, I will forego his company, but I will not betray his soul's estate. I found that soul, a priceless pearl abandoned in the mire; I snatched it from its foul association; I washed it with my tears; I shaped it with my prayers; I set it in the forefront of our Cause's diadem, and it is mine to wear.

Otho. No—I have come for it.

St. H. His soul is mine. I will not give it up!

Otho. [*Pause. Walks.*] See then, you need not.

Katchen, I wronged you once. Look you, I will repair that wrong. I offer you dominion, wealth, and fame, crowned by a loved one's love. Aye, Heinric's hand in marriage. [*Movement for ST. HULDA.*] Nay, I swear by Holy Rood and Peter's Chair to keep the confidence of what we only know, on one condition.

St. H. Which is?

Otho. That you renounce the Reformation's creed.

St. H. Can you be in earnest, Prince?

Otho. Think you I cannot do these things?

St. H. Indeed I think you can; but I cannot.

Otho. Cannot? Why?

St. H. You of all men should know that what I do, whether I spring at heaven or plunge to hell, I do with all my might. I set my teeth and sinned, knowing I sinned. What wrought the wreckage may salvation win, and as I served the Devil, so will I serve my God, with single heart.

Otho. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] I have come for Heinric.

St. H. [*Breaking down for a moment.*] Have you no pity? Not even memory? I gave you all without a thought. I asked for nothing in return. I do ask now: I ask for this man's better self, the self I roused, the nobler instincts I awoke and mothered to their prime—all these are mine, mine, mine! Sigbert, Sigbert, rob me not of that!

Otho. We are not children; you must choose. Either you give him up, or I must tell the truth.

St. H. Truth! What do you with truth? You to whom man's noblest aim is but a mummer's art? Simplicity, sincerity, and faith were mere attitudes, and life itself a game of cunning and conceit. What do you know of truth, whose love was treachery, whose honour is a lie? But if there be

Truth in you, go, cry it from the housetops—I do not fear you now.

Otho. You will deny it, eh? And Heinric will believe you? You think the peasant maid has outgrown recognition. Have a care! You may snatch Heinric for a space—a week, a month, a year, and then I come with proven facts and nail them at your door.

St. H. You need not search for proofs—Heinric shall know the truth.

Otho. Ah! I am to tell him?

St. H. No; I will tell him.

Otho. You! This is a trick too simple to deceive.

St. H. Did you ever know me lie in the old days?

Otho. No, Katchen, never.

St. H. Nor do I now. I will tell Heinric all, and you shall hear me.

Otho. Where?

St. H. Before the people in the public square. Go wait me there.

Otho. [*Aside.*] The woman's mad? [*Bowing.*]
I go

I must believe your word, and yet 'tis hard to understand.

St. H. You would not understand that I have longed for years to cry my secret to the winds. The fears that gagged me were not for myself, but others, lest the Cause should suffer for my sin. But now that I know Heinric can bear the truth and still be steadfast to the faith, I'll wear a mask no more.

Otho. There speaks a noble mind. I see it all!
[*Aside.*] She'll keep her word and lose her man.
Heinric comes back to us.

Enter FRIEKE hastily, L. C. B., with letter.

Frieke. Sister, sister!

[*Sees Otho and stops short. Hides the letter. Bus.*

Otho. [*Bowing.*] We meet again upon the Rath-haus steps.

[*Exit, L. C. B.*

Frieke. How he frightened me. But I hid the letter. See, sister, for you.

[*Gives letter.*

St. H. From John of Bradenberg. His secret mark.

Frieke. The Duke. Read, read! It should have reached you hours ago.

St. H. [*Opens.*] "Hold out against Prince Otho to the last—it is the Reformation's final chance. Maurice, the German Judas, has not played his last card yet. A month, a week, a day, may save the Cause. But time is everything."

Frieke. Aye! Heinric will stand firm.

St. H. He must know this. Take it, Frieke, and if anything should happen unto me, give it to him.

Frieke. What do you mean?

St. H. Frieke, we have met once more.

Frieke. We? Who?

St. H. Sigbert and I.

Frieke. The man who wronged—

St. H. Whom I once loved. Yes. He has just left the room.

Frieke. Otho, Prince of Halberstadt. [*Pause.*] Heinric does not know?

St. H. Not yet.

Frieke. He'll not believe it.

St. H. Yes, Frieke, for I go to tell the truth to him and to my people, from the Rath-haus steps.

Frieke. Sister! Sister! Are you mad. The people will reject you, drive you forth to Otho and to death—

St. H. So be it then. I bear a gospel greater than my life.

Frieke. 'Twill be the death-knell of the Cause. Think of this message. [*Shows letter.*] You must keep back the truth until we hear from Bradenberg again——

St. H. I have promised Otho I will lay my past before my people.

Frieke. You cannot keep that promise.

St. H. Frieke!

Frieke. [*To her very gently.*] I know what it will cost you, sister, and I do not ask it lightly. You could not tell a lie to save yourself, you must to save your people. You owe it to us, dear sister; to us who have risked our fortunes and our lives—our everything to follow you.

St. H. [*Touched, kissing her.*] I know the sacrifices you have made, the dangers you have run.

Frieke. Because we love the truth that is within you.

St. H. And yet, would have me lie. Oh, Frieke, Frieke!

Frieke. Yes, I would have you lie. There are lies that are less deceptive than half-truths. And Otho knows it. Otho knows your people—the common, stupid, loving folk who worship you—will never understand that God alone is perfect. Otho knows that if you tell them of your past they will renounce you, and the Cause be lost.

St. H. No, no! I may be lost, but not the Cause. God's ensign only passes from my unworthy hands to Heinric's firmer grasp. He will still lead the people to a wider, freer future.

Frieke. When his belief in you is gone? Never. He loves you, sister; kneeling before you as to one who comes from heaven not from earth.

St. H. [*Covering face.*] Don't, don't!

Frieke. Think of the shock. The shock!

St. H. His faith would still remain.

Frieke. Not even that. It is his love for you that weaves the passion of his faith. Take that, and all his better self goes with it.

St. H. If I thought that, the rack's worst agony should never make me speak.

Frieke. Indeed, indeed, 'tis so! My woman's instinct tells me it is so. Keep back the truth awhile—at least until we hear from Brandenburg again. Ah! promise that.

St. H. [*Walking to and fro.*] A lie! a lie!

Frieke. Not for yourself, but others; for the Cause.

St. H. [*Covering her ears.*] The Cause! It sounds like blasphemy. A lie, a lie!

Frieke. Aye, a lie. Think of this letter. A lie alone can give us time. Promise if Heinric falters—

St. H. He will not.

Frieke. But if he does—

St. H. I could not, could not—even for him.

Frieke. Would you have him hark back to his old life: the life of gamblers and of harlots—the life *you* called him from? That is what it means, and the last state of that man—

St. H. No, no! That shall not be, not though I steep myself in perjury and lies.

Frieke. [*With cry.*] You promise?

St. H. [*Giving hand.*] I promise—if he falters. [*Breaking away.*] Ah! but he will not. We wrong him, wrong him. He will stand firm. A month ago I was not sure; to-day I know. I know he will be steadfast to the Faith. What e'er becomes of me, my captain, my stout Joshua will lead you through the foe. Come, to the Rath-haus, for I have no fear.

[*Exeunt as Scene changes.*]

SCENE II.—*A Public Square before the Rath-haus. Streets lead off L. U. E. and R. B. C. The Rath-haus with steps and terrace. Full stage. CITIZENS in knots eagerly conversing.*

First Cit. What's this to-do!

Second Cit. Why does not the Burgomaster come forth?

First Cit. The Council sits as hard as an old hen upon her addled eggs.

Third Cit. Where's the Burgomaster?

Fourth Cit. Aye, where's the Burgomaster?

Voices. "The Burgomaster! The Burgomaster!"

[*Uproar.* CROWD gathers in front of Rath-haus and calls for BURGOMASTER. Enter KNIPPER-DOLLING, STORTEBEKER, Civic OFFICERS and TORCH-BEARERS from Rath-haus, also COUNCILLORS. Confusion and uproar in CROWD.

Tipstaff. Silence, silence for the Burgomaster!

Stort. [*Aside.*] I see Manteuffel in the crowd.

Knip. [*Aside.*] Devil-dog! Devil-dog! He's come to bait me.

Stort. Keep cool! keep cool!

Knip. Cool! I'm cold—stone cold and clammy.

Stort. Be a man, Burgomaster.

Knip. Fear not. A little pushing, a little presence. Oh, I can be a public man an I choose. A little "Thump, thump," and the crowd are with me.

First Cit. What of Prince Otho?

Second Cit. What of St. Hulda?

Mant. [*In crowd.*] Beware, brother, and dismiss the woman ere it is too late.

Knip. Fellow citizens—[*Uproar.*] Good gentle citizens. A little order, a little patience. Oh, you can be the gentlemen an you choose— [Uproar.]

Tipstaff. Silence! Silence!

[*Cries L. of "The Prince. The Prince." Enter*
 OTHO, OFFICER *and posse of* SOLDIERS, L.
Silence.

Otho. [*Aside.*] She has not come. [*Aloud.*] What now, Sir Burgomaster! I find the city gates are shut upon my men.

Knip. O noble Prince, it has ever been the custom here to close our gates at night-fall.

Otho. In the King's name I demand a passage for my soldiers.

Knip. Alas, high Prince, my orders are abortive. The garrison that hold the gates are Baron Heinic's men.

Otho. Then in the King's name I call upon you to head the citizens and take possession of the city's entrances. [*Sensation and murmurs in crowd.*] Citizens of Mindenburg: one word unto the public ear. King Charles has been advised that this, till now, most loyal city, is being swayed by Protestant seditions, the which his Majesty hath oft declared against, and now hath mind to treat more drastically; and I am come straight from my royal master to protect his city from its worser self—to quench the fatuous march-light which is leading you from solid order to a wild and water-logged conclusion. In few, I come to demand the deliverance of the mock St. Hulda, apostate and rank heretic.

Mant. Hear you that, brother? Give up this woman.

[*Murmurs. Enter HEINRIC behind CROWD, R.*

Otho. There spoke the voice of wisdom. Give her up.

Hein. [*At back.*] Stay, citizens, and hold your judgment till you hear the other part.

[*Mounts steps before people.*

Otho. Heinric, Lord of Mindenburg, I charge you by the warrant that I bear, I am in this purpose as the Emperor himself.

Hein. Then I appeal to Cæsar's self, not to his shadow. Withdraw your troops, and I will straight unto the King at Cologne, and surrender myself as hostage for Mindenburg's allegiance.

Otho. I cannot vary the terms of my strict presents. [*Hands warrant to BURGOMASTER.*] Will you comply herewith, or must I force obedience?

Knip. O noble Prince! [*To HEINRIC.*] O noble Lord! And worthy law-abiding citizens. [*To PRINCE.*] O mighty Prince, cannot you give us pause, that on the morrow we may sit upon this matter?

Otho. You will see the warrant directs the instant deliverance of its subjects. [*Aside.*] It was a trick to gain more time. She will not come.

Knip. Ah, yes, indeed is't so? I cannot read the royal script. [*Takes torch from TORCH-BEARER—his hands tremble violently.*] In truth it is a very hiccup of a-light to digest serious matters with. I see—'tis set most clear and leaves no scope but for precipitate action. [*To HEINRIC.*] Oh, noble Lord, see—'tis written here—your duty is declared Should we not give her up?

[*Murmurs of approval.*]

Hein. I will not give her up.

Shouts. "No, no. We will not give St. Hulda up!"

Knip. Citizens, citizens. Would you defy the King's High Officer?

Hein. I will not give her up.

Otho. Pause, Heinric, pause! I am unused to pleading, and my pride was never over-pliant, but for our old friendship's sake, once more I pray you pause.

Hein. It is too late, sir. That which divides us is greater than ourselves.

Otho. The glamour of a woman.

Hein. No, the future of our people.

Otho. Then, for their sake consider. You lead them to a future pregnant with privation, pain, and death. And all for what?

Hein. For what is valueless to him who has it not—the Faith that is within us.

Otho. [*Laughs.*] Whence comes this inspiration?

Hein. From Heaven.

Otho. Or from—Hymen? You have asked St. Hulda to become your wife?

Hein. Not till our Faith is justified.

Otho. I spoke but of the woman, not the Faith.

Hein. The woman and the Faith are one.

Otho. Ah! Then if she were not all she seems to you, what of the Faith.

Hein. We know that she is as the angels are.

Otho. But if she were not.

Hein. I say we know this woman—you do not.

Otho. [*Aside.*] Her courage fails her; I must speak the word!

[*Aloud.*] But if I did? Not in her saintly guise,
But as a woman who has drained the cup
Of lawless pleasure and illicit love,
Leaving her honour in the dregs—what then?

Hein. I'll not blaspheme her spotless purity
By such lewd fancy.

Otho. No. Because you dare
Not face the truth.

Hein. [*Hand to sword.*] Say you it is the truth?

Otho. Friend, friend, invoke no sword. We'll
come to that
Hereafter if need be. And when we draw
Death holds the sheath. But let us know the
ground
On which friends fight.

Hein. St. Hulda and the Faith!

Otho. But if she be no saint?

Hein. I'll hear no more,
Vile scoffer!

Enter HULDA and FRIEKE at back, unobserved.

Otho. Nay, let the people hear,
The people whom you beckon in her wake!
I blame no woman for that naughtiness
Which most become her sex, but *saints*——

Hein. Silence!
I love her, and that love has drenched my heart
Like blessed dewfall on the swooning rose;
I love her, and that love has called my soul
From depths of degradation to the heights
Where, star-crowned and supreme, the spirit feels
The pulse of God beat through the firmaments.
I love her, and that love has filled my life
With all the passion of a skylark's song,
Lifting from earth to heaven's ecstasy!

Otho. But if she be no saint?

Hein. I'll stand with you,
Laugh in God's face and cry, "All Truth's a lie!"
If she, our white-robed saint, be counterfeit,
Truth's but a shard, a shadow; we the fools
Of crass credulity and antic dreams!
If she be vile, all life's a hideous jest,
And on the sepulchre of our dead hopes
We'll dice for harlots with the bones of Faith,
And hail Death's coming with a drunkard's glee!

Otho. You force me to speak. That woman was
my mistress.

Hein. [*Drawing sword.*] You lie!

Otho. [*Suddenly seeing HULDA on steps, C.*] At
last! Behold. Let her deny!

Hein. [*With cry.*] Hulda, deny.

People. "Deny! Deny!"

Otho. [*Grimly.*] Deny!

Frieke. [*Up steps to HULDA—aside.*] Sister, sister!
Deny!

St. H. [*With supreme effort.*] It is a lie!

OTHO starts, then laughs. *With a great cry HEIN-
RIC and the PEOPLE cast themselves at HULDA'S
feet. She stands white and motionless on steps C.*

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

Eight weeks elapsed.

SCENE. *The Great Hall in HEINRIC'S Castle, commanding the walls of Mindenburg. Arched entrance L. Tapestry walls with transparency, C. B. Turret window, R. B. Fireplace, R. Armour, furniture, etc. N. B.—This Act can be played in same scene as Act I, if necessary. FRIEKE discovered tenderly binding MAX'S head.*

Frieke. [Kissing him tenderly.] Art better now, dear man?

Max. Much! [Rises.] But you haven't got a bite of anything to give me, just to play with, eh?

Frieke. Max, Max, we've not a morsel in the Castle. We ate the old Tom cat two days ago—and you are starving, Max, I know you are. I wish you could eat me.

Max. [Kissing her.] I don't think you'd agree with me—you never have for long, you know?

Frieke. Dear Max, I'll never flout thee more.

Max. Lord, yes, you will! and it will do me good.

Frieke. [Nestling.] Nay, if thou'lt take me I will prove a humble wife, an we escape from Otho and his men. But shall we, Max? Famine and fever stalk the streets.

Max. Cheerily, sweetheart, cheerily! We who stand round St. Hulda must have no doubts.

Frieke. Ah, what a woman!

Max. Woman! she's an angel! And more than an angel, she's a general! You should see her on the walls wearing her jerkin like a man, with a word

here and a smile there, until the veriest craven feels himself a lion!

Frieke. And you should see her with her armour off, soothing the sick and wounded with gentle touch and tender pity, bringing the balm of comfort through the wards of pains!

Enter HEINRIC.

Max. [*Uncovering.*] God save St. Hulda!

Frieke. Amen, amen!

Hein. [*Coming down.*] Amen! Max, I would speak with thee.

Frieke. I'll to Sister Hulda, my lord. The children will be shortly here, the children she has fed each day since famine fell upon us, but we have nothing left to give them. 'Twill break Hulda's heart to hear them cry for food, and we have nought to offer.

Hein. I know, I know! The sufferings of others wring her more than her own pains. See what you can do, good Frieke, see what you can do.

Frieke. I'll try, my lord, but food is scarce in Mindenburg.

[*Exit FRIEKE.*

Hein. Max, you're an honest fellow. Through these eight long weeks of siege you've been my right hand man; you have made soldiers of the citizens; you have taught them obedience, endurance, courage, and I wish to take you by the hand and thank you for your service.

Max. You make me a proud man, my lord, beyond my merit. I only followed you, my lord, and it is an easy thing to follow where one has belief.

Hein. [*Shaking him by the hand.*] You're a brave fellow, Max. We've done our best, and we are beaten.

Max. Not yet, my lord, I hope.

Hein. Yes, Max, our hour has come. One of my spies got through the enemy last night with this fell news; Maurice of Saxony himself is marching here with reinforcements for Otho's Spanish soldiery.

Max. Maurice himself!

Hein. Ay, Maurice the Renegade. Maurice, whom the Reformers once looked to as their saviour,—Maurice who betrayed the Cause,—is marching on us now. Our men are worn by famine, thinned by pestilence—Maurice must force the town by sheer weight of numbers.

Max. We can but die, my lord, face foremost.

Hein. Aye, but the women?

Max. You mean the Spanish soldiers? I never thought of that. And yet I should have done, for I have served with them, and seen such things as no man cares to speak on. My lord, there's one within these walls I love so well. I'd give my life to save her pain, but rather than see her fall into the hands of those black butchers, I'd take her life myself.

Hein. I will prevent that fate. Our women shall not fall into their hands. [*Trumpet off.*] No word of this to anyone. That summons may be our last, if so, good friend, good-bye!

[*They shake hands in silence.*]

Enter ST. HULDA and FRIEKE.

St. H. Friends, friends, the call!

Hein. One word, dear sister, let them go first!

Max. [*Aside to FRIEKE.*] Wear this dagger at thy garter, sweetheart. If the Spaniards storm the town it will save thy honour.

Frieke. Fear not, dear Max, I understand.

Max. [*Kisses her.*] God bless thee, and good-bye!

Frieke. May I walk a little way with thee, brave Max?

[*Exeunt MAX and FRIEKE.*

Hein. [*Down with Hulda.*] I would not have thee to the walls to-day, dear sister.

St. H. Why not?

Hein. I will lead the men myself. I would have thee here to comfort the women and children.

St. H. But why?

Hein. Because thy general wishes it. And, sister, if—and it might happen now at any time—if the enemy should force the town, promise me thou wilt not pass into their hands alive.

St. H. I cannot promise that.

Hein. Ah, but thou must! Thou does not know what these fierce brutes would do to thee. They'd mock thee, beat thee, strip thee: thou would'st be the very plaything of their passions and their lust! See here, sister. [*Shows fuse in floor.*] I've had this laid down to the magazine. If the enemy reach yonder street, fire this [*Shows flint*], and circle all in instantaneous doom.

St. H. No, Heinric, that I cannot do——

Hein. Hulda! thou dost not fear to fend thine honour with thy life? Fore Heaven, I—I could do it for thee.

St. H. That's not true courage, brother! He who gives us life is as the Captain setting of the night-watch; we must not quit our post till we are called.

Hein. Can Heaven wish to see thee tortured and defiled?

St. H. If so, so be it! If not the Captain will send round His last relief. [*Cross to him, giving hands.*] Brother, brother! doubt not His Mercy—nor trouble for my sake!

Hein. [*Clutching her hands passionately.*] Hulda!

[*Cannon off, trumpets, drums, alarums, church bells ring. Enter FRIEKE and CHILDREN, who crowa round HULDA.*

Chil. Hulda, Hulda, we are afraid!

St. H. [*Soothing them.*] Fear not, fear not, my little people. The thunder cannot hurt you here

Hein. [*Aside.*] If it is a sin to save her purity, mine be the sin. Frieke, a word. [*They stand aside.*] Thou art a fearless woman?

Frieke. As women go, my lord.

Hein. Fearing dishonour before death?

Frieke. My man hath left me—this.

[*Shows dagger.*

Hein. You must save Hulda too.

Frieke. How, my lord?

Hein. If Otho's men attain the street, light this, and blow the castle to the skies.

Frieke. I will, my lord.

Hein. I leave her honour in your charge.

[*He gives her his hand. Trumpets.*

Frieke. My lord, I'll not betray it.

Hein. [*Coming down.*] Aye, guard the little ones, and God guard thee!

St. H. I know that He will save us yet!

Hein. Thy faith is marvellous.

St. H. Not more than thine in me.

Hein. Good-bye!

St. H. Good-bye!

Hein. May I, sister? It is the first, as it may be the last. [*He lifts her face—he kisses her on the cheek.*] Good-bye. [*To FRIEKE.*] Remember!

[*Exit HEINRIC.*

Chil. Hulda, Hulda, we are hungry!

St. H. [*Caressing them.*] I know—I know. It will not be for long. The good God will discom-

fort the wicked soldiers and drive them away, and then we shall all be happy evermore.

Chil. And have good things to eat?

St. H. [*With forced gaiety.*] Aye—to be sure. Good milk to drink and meats to eat and bread and butter—aye, and maybe cakes.

Chil. Will it be soon?

St. H. Aye, soon, please God—quite soon. And now what shall we do to cheat dull time? Look you, a catch, a merry catch! Who knows a merry catch? How goes it? [*Sings.*]

I know a naughty maid,
 Who can she be,
 With hair unkempt as hay in cock,
 With shoon awry and dirty smock,
 With horrid holes in either sock,
 Thou, thou art she!

[CHILDREN *join in catch-song.* *Boom of cannon, bells, and blare of trumpets off.* *Enter WOMAN excitedly.*

Woman. Lost! lost! The city gates have been betrayed and through the roaring sluices the Spanish spears rush in. [*Distant noise of men.*] The enemy are on us, see! [*To window.*] Round the further angle of the street the hordes of death appear!

Frieke. [*At window.*] Look at the banners! They are Maurice's men!

[*Some of the children cry and hustle together.*

St. H. Children! children! [*Sings in loud, firm voice.*] "I know a naughty maid——"

Woman. [*At window.*] Nearer! nearer! Horror! They wave their arms in fury, and a thousand hands are stretched in anger to the sky! Sister, sister, they come for thee!

[*Noise louder, and confused shouting and singing.*

St. H. [*Singing.*] "I know a naughty maid——"

Frieke. [*Aside.*] Fear not, they shall not take her!

[*FRIEKE crosses to fuse with flint and tinder-box, kneels down and strikes flint.*

St. H. Frieke, what are you doing?

Frieke. [*Lighting fuse.*] Preparing a German greeting for our Spanish guests!

Woman. [*Frantically.*] Curse 'em, curse 'em! We'll die, but not surrender!

St. H. [*Rushing across to fuse.*] Frieke! Frieke!

Frieke. [*Dragging her from fuse.*] Stand back!

St. H. [*Stamping out fuse.*] Woman, woman! where is thy faith?

Frieke. I promised Heinric if the enemy—

St. H. [*With a great cry.*] The enemy! Not so, the Lord of Hosts is with us. Hark! [*Rushes to window and throws it open. Sunlight upon her.*] 'Tis Luther's hymn!

[*Above the shouts and confusion is clearly heard the triumphant hymn. Enter HEINRIC hastily.*

Hein. A miracle! A miracle! Hulda, thy faith is justified. Maurice of Saxony has turned once more and joined the cause of German Reformation! King Charles the Catholic is in full flight from Innsbruck to the Alps! Maurice's men are our defenders. The Spaniards, surprised and overwhelmed, lay down their arms; the city gates gape wide again, and peace and plenty come singing down the streets!

Chil. [*Clapping hands.*] St. Hulda promised we should soon have food. And now! and now!

Hein. Aye, St. Hulda knew. Take them, Frieke, take them! Pledge my credit to the hilt, but see that they are fed—poor little lambs!—see that they are fed.

[*Exit FRIEKE, followed by CHILDREN laughing, dancing, and clapping their hands. HULDA staggers, fainting.*]

Hein. [*Supporting her.*] Hulda!

St. H. Air! more air!

Hein. [*Leading her to window.*] Thy armour is sore heavy, thou canst put it off. Let me assist thee.

St. H. Nay, I am better. Thou art sure the news is true?

Hein. Behold a copy of the King's own brief, granting Protesters fullest liberty. Mindenburg is free, and this thy victory!

[*Places edict in her lap, and kisses her hand.*]

St. H. Nay, touch me not! No—no! Sit there, somewhat away from me, until my speech be done. If this indeed be victory, my sojourn here grows short.

Hein. Hulda!

St. H. Nay, listen! Turn your face towards the wall and listen; for now the greater truth has won the day, the lesser truth must follow, as we have seen the moon rise on the setting sun!

Hein. Nothing can mar thy triumph in this hour of thy supremacy!

St. H. [*Mute gesture. Pause. Then in dull tones.*] You may remember, Heinric,—Oh, 'tis most difficult!—you may remember how I told you once about a wicked woman?

Hein. Surely a tale of weakness rather than of wickedness, that to your innocence seemed very terrible.

St. H. Aye so! because I am not innocent!

Hein. Hulda!

St. H. Otho did not lie. I lied unto you all. This story is my history.

[*HEINRIC rises and faces her, speechless. He tries to speak, but cannot, and sink into chair again. She sits white and rigid. Pause. The children's merry laughter and joyous trebles heard off.*]

Hein. [*With effort.*] The children—they soon forget their pains! [*Pause.*] It is a blessed thing to hear the children's laughter.

St. H. [*Dully.*] Yes, a blessed thing.

Hein. [*After pause.*] And the women—I pray they be relieved—they suffered much.

St. H. Yea, the women always suffer.

Hein. [*After pause.*] They too will soon forget their travail, and the new life shall justify birth's pangs.

St. H. Yea, the new life.

Hein. [*Rising.*] Thou must put aside thine armour, and go to them.

St. H. [*Rising mechanically.*] Yea, I must go to them.

Hein. And I to my brave soldiers, or to such of them as live to wear their victory. After keen effort comes reaction's drouse as under-suck upon the breaking wave. I'm numb, frost-bitten, foolish. I'd fain say much, I'm confined to this: What you have told me can make no breach between us two—I ask you still to be my wife.

St. H. Heinric! Heinric! [*Then flinging herself against the wall.*] Oh, my God! my God!

Hein. Hulda! Hulda! be calm! I love you.

St. H. Why don't you strike me to the ground? Stamp on me, crush me, kill me! Were I a man who had been thus deceived, I'd kill the woman who could dupe me so.

Hein. Deceived, but never duped.

St. H. I lied to you—I lied!

Hein. As we oft lie to children, teaching beliefs as stepping-stones to ampler inspiration, which detects amidst conflicting cries of human imperfection the rolling anthem of God's great design.

St. H. Oh! oh! I cannot bear it. Leave me! Leave me! Cannot you see I am not strong enough to face my punishment?

Hein. I only know one thing, that I am of thy making. That from the moment I first heard thy voice, first read God's legend on thy moonlit brows, my old self died within me, and my new life began. Ask, am I better, am I worse? for evil or for good I am thy creature, and though thou be not perfect more than I, am I to judge thee or to weigh against the sin of one defeat the virtue of a thousand victories! Hulda, my speech comes back to mock its impotence, for I can say do more than that I love. And all the meaning of my life, with all its nobler instincts and diviner aims are summed in those two words, "I love." I love thee—be my wife?

St. H. Thy wife! Oh—no—no—no!

Hein. [*Seizing her by wrist.*] Look me in the face and say thou dost not love me, and I'll go.

St. H. [*Breaking away.*] Will man's mind never read a woman's instinct? It is because I love thee, Heinric, love thee so that it would be more natural for the young mother when she feels the nestle of the first born, at her side to strangle it with curses, than for me to taste love's sacrament, being a thing impure.

Hein. Hulda! Hulda! give me hope!

St. H. Yea, I'll give thee hope, oh, dear one! It lies among thy people. I came to fold thy sheep, but they are thine to tend. And some will stray, and thou must seek and save; and some will throw themselves, and thou must set them on their feet again; and some will sicken and thou must heal; and all will look to thee, and thou must watch them all, when I am gone, for in their happiness thy comfort lies.

Enter OTHO unobserved.

Hein. They cannot spare thee, and for me, I will not. Nay, though thou turn'st from me to-day and

yet to-morrow and to-morrow's morrow, I'll follow after thee ——

Otho. [*Coming down.*] Not when you know!

[*With a cry* ST. HULDA *shrinks back.* HEINRIC *instinctively folds her in his arms and faces the* PRINCE. *Keep picture.*

Hein. What do you here?

Otho. I come to bid you bye with fair congratulations on your victory—yours and the saintly Hulda's.

Hein. [*To HULDA.*] I'll hand thee into Frederike's charge—this air's too foul for thy sweet soul to breathe. [*Leads her up.*

St. H. [*Pausing—aside.*] Heinric, thou wilt not——

Hein. Join thou the women. I will mind this man. [*Bus., and exit HULDA. Coming down.*] Well?

Otho. I' faith, all's well. We can speak freely now.

Hein. Be brief!

Otho. Maurice of Saxony has doubled on his tracks and left his followers at loss.

Hein. I know!

Otho. The Emperor has fled, leaving the Protestants possessed of Germany.

Hein. I know!

Otho. And Hulda, Saint of Mindenburg——

Hein. I know!

Otho. And I am here to lay at her new shrine as votive offering the public record of her past—and mine—in unregenerate days.

Hein. You can tell me nothing that I do not know—and I have vowed two vows.

Otho. More rash than Jephtha, for he vowed but one.

Hein. But kept it. I have vowed, God willing, I will marry Hulda.

Otho. [*Steps to him.*] Now that you know——

Hein. [*Looking straight at him.*] The man who wronged her? Yes! And I have vowed to kill him!

[*The two men face each other, then OTHO laughs.*]

Otho. When?

Hein. Now!

Otho. Here?

Hein. [*Pointing to the door.*] Not where she is——

Otho. [*With change of voice.*] Heinric, Heinric! it was I who taught thee thy first tierce.

Hein. Which shall come home again.

Otho. As you will, then—but I warn you——

Hein. Enough! I know that God is with the right!

Otho. Your blood be upon your head. This is no work of mine. But lead, I'll follow.

[*Exeunt HEINRIC and OTHO.*]

Luther's hymn heard approaching. Enter BURGHERS, CITIZENS, WOMEN, and CHILDREN with flowers and wreaths, singing. Enter KNIPPERDOLLING, COUNCILLORS, TIPSTAFF, etc. Hymn ceases. Enter MAX and FRIEKE.

Knip. Where is St. Hulda? Let someone publish that we wait on her to honour her!

Tip. Summon St. Hulda!

Voices. "St. Hulda! St. Hulda! Victory! we are free!"

Knip. [C.] Aye, free! And I have crowned that freedom by committing to prison a contrary and contumacious Catholic—even my own dear brother, Manteuffel. [*Murmurs of assent.*] A little sternness, a little justice. Oh, I can be a Rhadamanthus an I choose—a little—[*waves hand judicially*], and the Reformation is complete! But she, she comes,

she comes! Our virgin Saint of Mindenburg!
Hail! Hail!

Enter ST. HULDA, very pale. She has changed her armour for a simple robe of white. Burst of wild cheering and popular emotion. FOLK crowd on her, laughing and weeping; some kiss her hands and garments. A WOMAN crowns her with white roses, a MAN thrusts a stalk of white lilies into her hand. ST. HULDA is deeply moved.

St. H. [Overcome.] My brethren, my dear brethren——

[Pause, then more calmly.] It is a great and joyous thing to feel

The glowing tide of your affection storm
The channels of my heart, until the banks
Nigh burst with plentitude. And though the neap
Hereafter follow, on my soul is set
The proud high-water mark of your regard.
I am not worthy of this radiant crown,
Nor of this liliated sceptre, but allow
This moment's grace as token of your love.
Before I go——

[Murmurs.

Voice. "Nay—you have won the battle,
The glory is with you——"

Voice. "You led us, Hulda!
We followed you!"

St. H. Ye slept, I but aroused you.
My feeble torch but lit your faggot's blaze,
Which now doth burn so bravely that no hand
Of mortal man can quench its fiery beacon,
Whose sparks, like constellations, shall illumine
Long after my poor light be paled and past,
Brief in its splendour as a falling star!
My task is finished. Let me therefore pass——

[The PEOPLE press on her with cries of "Never, never!" "Abide with us always!"

St. H. Friends, friends, have mercy! Give me room to breathe! I am not over-strong.

Voice. "Stay with us, stay!"

St. H. [*Pause.*] Yea—I will stay if you shall bid me stay—when you have heard me out. Give me some air—I pray you air——

Voices. "Saint Hulda!" "Sister Hulda!"

St. H. [*Removing crown from her head.*] Sister in weakness, not a saint in strength.

God's ways are wonderful, and we who hold
Our little parts in Life's great Passion Play,
Give colour to this character or that
Writ down for us to act. We can but do
Our best with our particular scenes, nor hope
To understand the unity which weaves
The infinite complexity of life
Into a perfect plot. (That shall not be
Until th' immortal Author of it all
Concludes Creation and writes down "The End!")
And so, perchance, a sinner may be set
To speak sweet words of saintly utterance,
And she may feel the beauty of those words
The more that she herself is frail,—
Aye, and convey their sense with subtler touch,
Knowing both the good and ill. It may be so.
Our human quilt is patchwork, black and white,
But sown with threads of golden sympathy,
Which shall outwear Life's pickings and Death's
rents.

And if it has been mine to holpen some,
If from the Devil's dunghill I have snatched
One single grain of lost humanity,
To store it with the stars in Heaven's loft
Of golden grainery, I am content.
Dismiss me with some kindness as my wage,
But deem me not a saint, for though my words
Come winged from God, the lips that speak them
bear

The taint of our mortality, and I—
Am as my sister—fallen Magdalen.

[*Movement in crowd.*
And all the Prince proclaimed me on the day
Ye stood by me in loyalty and love
I am, and worse, because I lied to you—

[*Pause. Dead silence. Men look at one another.
Women whisper. BURGOMASTER anxiously
scans the faces of his neighbours, then turns
and goes.*

Tip. Leave for his Worship! let his Worship pass!

[*Exit BURGOMASTER. Others follow him rapidly,
others doubtfully. HULDA stands white and
motionless, with the crown at her feet and the
lilies crushing in her hands. One of the chil-
dren runs to kiss her; its mother snatches it up
hastily, harshly, and leaves. Exeunt omnes,
except FRIEKE and MAX. FRIEKE moves to ST.
HULDA.*

Max. [*Aside to her.*] Whither goest thou?

Frieke. [*Aside.*] To Sister Hulda.

Max. [*Catching her hand, aside.*] Thou shalt not
peril thy good name for her!

Frieke. [*Aside.*] Max, Max, she is our sister!

Max. She is lost!

Frieke. Who says 't? She is a woman who has
loved,

And being such more near perchance to God
Than some who pray, knowing not Charity.

[*Max drops her hand and exits.*

Frieke. [*Goes gently to ST. HULDA.*] Hulda, Sister
Hulda, let me be with thee. [*Touches her. HULDA
starts as from a dream, and tries to wave her off, almost
fiercely; then suddenly, with a sob, falls forward into
FRIEKE'S arms in a paroxysm of tears.*] Poor
quavering heart! So—so—control thy pain.
[*HULDA suddenly stiffens in her arms.*] Hulda!
what is it? Blood! My God, she's dying!

[*Places her on chair.*

St. H. [*faintly.*] Heinric—go fetch me Heinric!

Frieke. And leave thee?

St. H. Go—go, he must be nigh!

Frieke. I dare not leave—

St. H. [*Rising with supreme effort.*] I bid you
go! Fear not. I *will* not die
Till I have looked upon his face again!
Go, as you love me, go! no words, but go!

[*Pushes FRIEKE off.*

I must be calm and miser all my strength
Until he comes. He will not turn from me,
But take me to his heart and comfort me,
And I shall feel his warmth, nor be ashamed
Of love's farewell caress. How dark it grows!
And cold—so cold without him.

[*To Window.*] Heinric, come!

Heinric, I want you! I'm dying, Heinric!

Dear God, not yet—not yet—have mercy! Heinric!

[*Falls behind window curtain dead. Enter HEINRIC joyously.*

Hein. Hulda! not here! Frieke, where is thy
mistress?

Both gone, and with no word or tryst for me.

[*Sees Hulda.*

What! Hiding from me! Nay, come forth, sweet-
heart,

There is no cause for fear! Thy wrongs are righted,
Death hath arrested thy sole enemy,

And that foul laugh which mocked thy innocence
Shall ring in hell alone! Still mute! she sleeps

[*Draws near.*

Bankrupt of strength she squandered on the weak,

I will not break the seal of those sweet eyes,

Twin wonder-worlds of mystery and hope.

Sleep on, dear one, serene and satisfied,

Let wings of angels winnow thy past cares

Sifting the husk of fleshy accident
 From the quick sea of thy sublimer self,
 Which shall regerm hereafter. Nay, I'll wake
 Thee now to gladness. [Gently.
 Hulda! Hulda dear! [Louder.
 Hulda, awake! It is thy Heinric calls.

[Takes her hand. Starts. Bus., with cry.

Dead! My God! No, no, she does but swoon!
 Dear Hulda, speak to me. Cold, cold and lifeless.
 Taken, and I am left! Dead—and I live!
 This is hell-woven mockery and spite!
 Gone! gone! There is no justice on the earth,
 There is no pity in God's sky, the world
 But rocks at random through a howling void,
 And man, the ace of sensitive despair,
 Is shuttlecocked by cosmic cruelties.
 There is no hope, no help. I do deny
 The scope of heaven and the scope of hell.
 I'll beg dead Otho's laugh—curse God, and die!

[Draws sword and is about to fall on it. Children's
 hymn outside. Twilight deepens. Through
 transparency at back is seen ST. HULDA as she
 first appeared to HEINRICH.

St. H. Faith is the Pharos of our pilgrim race,
 Lost on the plains of darkness and dismay.
 Be yours that light. A pin-point in the dark,
 But steadfast as a star that shall not set,
 Till o'er the beetling hill-tops which have reared
 Fixed limitations to man's finite reach,
 The sluice of dawn be lifted and the flood
 Of God's illumination palpitate
 Above us, in us, of us, and we know!
 Dear God, I pray Thee, give thy people Faith!

[Vision fades. Moonlight upon HEINRIC. The
 sword has fallen from his hand, and a great
 change has come over his face. He walks very
 slowly across to the side of the dead woman
 and reverently takes her hand.

Hein. I hear thee, Spirit, call across the gulf.

*[With face uplifted in the moonlight still grasping
the dead one's hand.]*

Life is thy echo. Hulda, I believe!

[Hymn of the CHILDREN.]

SLOW CURTAIN.

THE SIN OF ST. HULDA

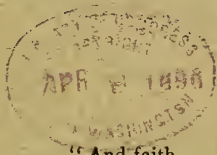
OR

LOVE AND FAITH

AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

G. STUART OGILVIE

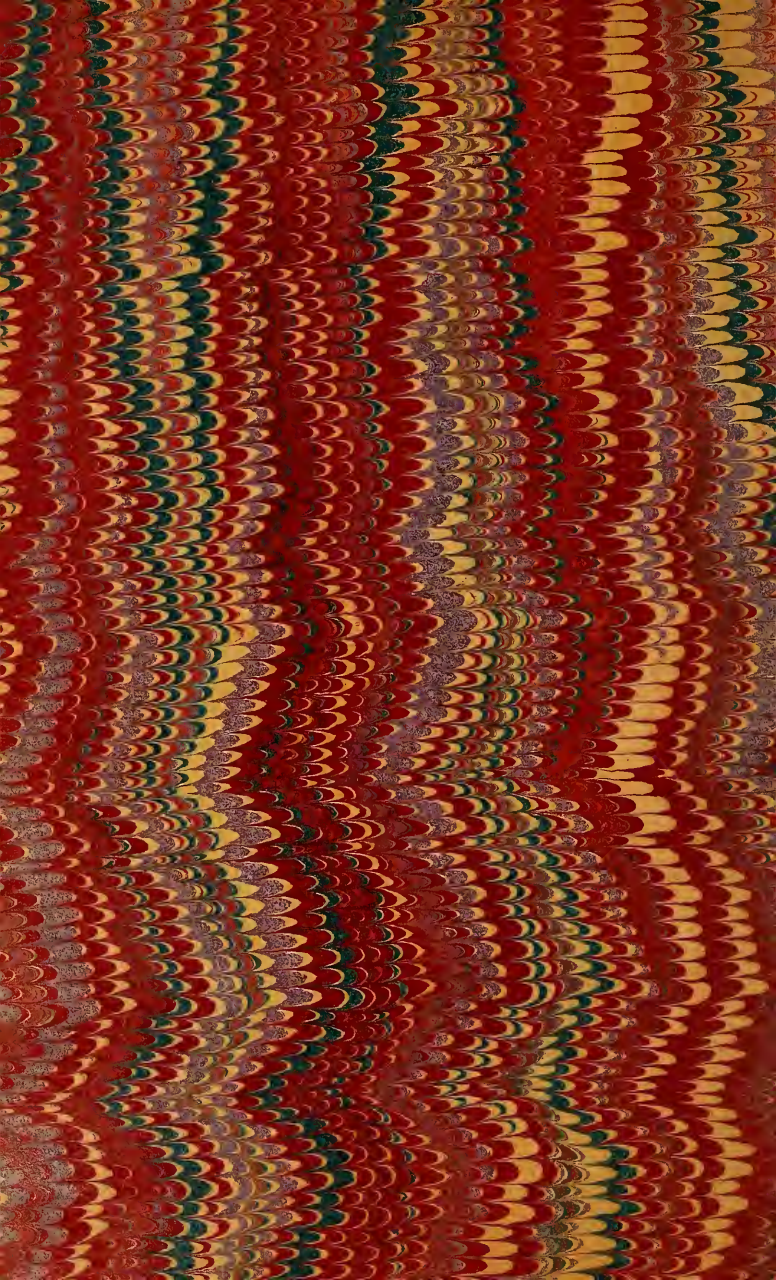


"And faith,
Creating what it feigned."

—SHELLEY.

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